



We have circled around the art and skill of distinguishing between law and gospel in a tornado like spiral. We have introduced the differences of the two doctrines in chapter 1, and we have circled into the wider idea of the application of these differences in several practical ways. One of these is effective witnessing Christ to neighbors. By our actions, our body language, and by our words we will say something about Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We have added more applications of distinguishing properly law and gospel. So our spiral is getting larger. We have come in with different experiences at different places on the spiral. We have talked about teaching Sunday school (VBS), but we can add more to our model by sharing about parenting. Which will be effective to encourage your children to memorize Scripture for religion classes; the use of God's law or the gospel?



If you prepared for this lesson by reading chapter 4 in the book, you did well. What was your motivation? Was it to please God? To please the teacher? To avoid embarrassment?

Am I making you feel uncomfortable? We would all like to believe that we were motivated by Jesus' love for us. But like Peter we too, betray him and we often act out of selfish motivation instead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the law. OK, if you need a review go to the small catechism question 18 pp. 54-56.

How about your feelings as you read through this chapter and the execution of God's law to his people? I felt very uncomfortable. It was somewhat like drinking bitter poison. I was dying in a most unpleasant way reading "The Law". Effective preaching of the law has that effect. Preaching such unpleasant stuff must make our pastoral staff nervous like we feel when we must confront our children. Our pastoral staff must want to spare us such tough contemplations. But, he who would try to water down the law serves no good thing. Like trying to spare our children from the ugliness of death, we don't serve their best interests. Sin is an unpleasant topic to discuss anytime. Admitting to our children that we sin too, is honest. But, do we want to go so far as to admit that we sin against our spouse, or child, our church members, our pastor as well as God?

Pless says on page 39, "The Law offers no way of escape." We read in Romans 3:19-20 that the law does make us feel troubled because no one can find righteousness in the law. So we cannot use the law as good news by forcing the 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the law to moralization. The work of the Holy Spirit is to motivate us with the law, as a teacher I can't compete with the Holy Spirit in working faith in children's hearts even if it is a goal of mine in the lesson plan. I shouldn't think so highly of myself as to force faith upon anyone, even a 4 year old. Faith comes by hearing, so I speak God's words.

1. Read Galatians 3 1-14. How had the Galatians mingled the law with the gospel? How does the apostle Paul demonstrate that faith is not a work of the law in this text?
2. Analyze this statement: "The gospel demands that we show love to our neighbors in need." Or its Sunday school cousin, "We must give the children a social project to do to demonstrate God's love." How does it confuse law with gospel?
3. A pastor urges his congregation to "do the gospel" by launching an aggressive program of evangelism in the community. On the basis of Thesis VI, how might Walther respond to such an appeal? Troubled at the prospect of "cheap grace" and moral laxity, some Christians have urged that "we need to put some teeth into the gospel." How does such an admonition diminish the gospel?
4. Reflect on these words from a sermon by Luther in 1532: "For the law has its terminus, defining how far it is to go and what it is to achieve, namely, to terrify the impenitent with the wrath and displeasure of God and drive them to Christ. Likewise the Gospel has its unique office and function: to preach the forgiveness of sins to the troubled consciences. Let the doctrine then not be falsified, either by mingling these two into one, or by mistaking the one for the other" (Martin Luther, "The Distinction between Law and Gospel: A Sermon by Martin Luther," trans. Willard L. Burce, Concordia Journal 18 [April 1992]: 154). What are the limits of the Law? What is the "unique office and function of the Gospel?"

For many later years in my life I earned a living as a painter. The use of white paint intrigued me. I used white paint a lot. I also on occasion I used pure black paint, especially on iron work railings. There was no mistaking the white paint that I used on ceilings with a cream or off white color. We used a nearly pure white on ceilings to reflect light downward. Sometimes decorators or customers would use a black piece to contrast with a stark white wall. There was no mistaking the white for black and vice a versa. Putting a little black in the white paint had the effect of graying the white and adding white to black paint will produce a slate grey, or charcoal grey. Mixing the colors muddles them both. The black is no longer black and the white is no longer white. That was the message the author was trying to convey in this chapter. The gospel can't accuse the sinner of wrong doing and the law can't bring comfort and joy to the guilty. In today's world we want to "be nice", avoid unpleasant topics like religion and politics, want everyone to be happy, and most of all we don't want our grandchildren to feel the disappointment of being left out or losing a softball game. So we try to avoid the law and use the gospel to motivate our children to do the right thing. That is moralizing and doesn't work. If sin weren't in the world, (and in my heart), I wouldn't need a savior. If there isn't a need for a savior, the Christmas story isn't very meaningful. Is it any wonder that America is becoming more secular at Christmas? That attendance at church services at Christmas grows smaller?

Lord, thank you for both the law and gospel. Each have different purposes and come to me in your word. I thank you for sending Jesus to be the fulfillment of the law and taking my place in the grave and rising again to conquer death. Amen