



Law & Gospel

HOW TO SPOT COUNTERFEIT TEACHING BY STUDYING THE ORIGINAL

Why study this?

At Praise & Worship, every sermon, every Bible Study, every teaching of every kind, is presented within the never-ending activity of seeking to rightly divide Law & Gospel. **Law is what God commands us to do. Gospel is what God Himself promises to do.**

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth... 2 Timothy 2:15.

We seek this distinction because many Scriptures invite us to see the differences we find throughout God's Word.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.—John 1:17.

For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.—2 Corinthians 3:14-16.

Note that Law and Gospel are found on every page of the Bible. But it is only through Jesus that we can SEE them clearly. You'll often hear us say things like: we focus on Jesus. He is our starting point our middle point, and our ending point. Everything centers upon Him!

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.—Titus 3:4-8.

The difference between Law and Gospel are critical to understanding all of God's Word. It is a simple thought, but a never-ending process. **Law is what God commands us to do. Gospel is what God Himself promises to do.** The pivot point between these two happens in our hearts by way of who we are. Consider these words written by the reformers nearly 500 years ago, as they were seeking to encourage one another in this endeavor:

The distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God's Word properly and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles. Therefore, we must diligently preserve this distinction, so as not to mix these two teachings together and make the gospel into a law. For this obscures the merit of Christ and robs troubled consciences of the comfort that they otherwise have in the holy gospel when it is preached clearly and purely. With the help of this distinction these consciences can sustain themselves in their greatest spiritual struggles against the terror of the law.—Formula of Concord, The Solid Declaration, Article V, Paragraph 1.

What is the Law?

The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. — Galatians 3:24

The Law (New Testament Greek = “Nomos” / Old Testament Hebrew = “Torah”) is God’s Will, communicated to us through His Word. The word can be used in a narrow sense, such as the Ten Commandments, but also in a wide sense to include every single command He has uttered to us. But note: regardless of how it is defined, narrow or wide, what it actually *is* remains the same: **God’s Will communicated to us through His Word!**

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. —John 14:15.

The Law is present all throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is found on every page of Scripture, and in most cases, it is found in every sentence.

Experiment: Find the Law in John 3:16-17. Remember: The Law is God’s Will...

Vocabulary Note!

- When encountering the word “law” in the Bible, this word can refer to the following:
 - God’s Will communicated through one or more **commandments** (there are many more than 10!).
 - Example: “Now we know that whatever the **law** says it speaks to those who are under the **law**, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.” — Romans 3:19
 - God’s Word specifically identified as **the first five books** of the Bible.
 - Example of both uses in one sentence: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the **law**, although the **Law** and the Prophets bear witness to it...” — Romans 3:21.

The Law does not, nor cannot save us.

We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. — Galatians 2:16.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul uses the word “justified” (Greek = dikaiow) which means “declared righteous” or “made right” with God.

Dig Deeper: Read Luke 18:9-14 where Jesus tells how one is “justified”. Also, note that entire books of the Bible are dedicated to this topic, including Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians, just to name a few. Also a detailed study of Habakkuk, Isaiah 40-55 and Genesis 12-15 and 22 are excellent places to see Law and Gospel powerfully taught or demonstrated in the Old Testament.

What is the Gospel?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. —Romans 1:16.

The Gospel is **the Good News of what God has done, is doing and is promising to do for us!**

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. —1 Corinthians 15:1-2.

The Gospel saves us. That is to say, God works through His Word to save us!

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. —Romans 10:17.

The Gospel is **power** (see Romans 1:16 again!) while the Law has no power to save.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? —Galatians 3:1-2

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. —Romans 8:3-5.