

Law and Gospel

Lesson 3 - Law and Gospel in History

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth - 2 Tim 2:15

Disclaimers

1. Synonymous/Metonymous language
 - a. Law
 - i. Letter (of stone), works, command, requirement, demand, death, Moses, old, etc.
 - b. Gospel
 - i. Grace, mercy, good news, spirit, replacement, life, Christ, new, etc.
2. Doctrinal Development

Is This Distinction Historical?

1. 49AD - **Galatians 3:10-14**
2. 207 AD - **Tertullian**
 - a. Against Marcion 5.13 "I regret still to have to contend about the law, after I have so often proved that its replacement (by the gospel) affords no argument for another god, predicted as it was indeed in Christ, and in the Creator's own plans ordained for His Christ... where he says: "I am not ashamed of the gospel...he undoubtedly ascribes both the gospel and salvation to... the Just God. It is He who removes (men) from confidence in the law to faith in the gospel; that is to say, His own law and His own gospel."
3. 390AD - **Chrysostom**
 - a. Homily 14 on John 1:17 "See how the type was given by Moses, but the Truth came by Jesus Christ... The Law said, 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in this book.' But what says grace? 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"
 - b. Homily 11 on Romans "'The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.' (2 Corinthians 3:6) For the Law convinces of transgression, but grace undoes transgression. As then the former by convincing establishes sin, so the latter by forgiving suffers us not to be under sin. And so you are in two ways set free from this thralldom; both in your not being under the Law, and in your enjoying grace."
4. 354-430AD - **Augustine**
 - a. The Spirit and The Letter 29 "[contrasting Mt. Sinai w/ Pentecost] There it was on tables of stone that the finger of God operated; here it was on the hearts of men. There the law was given outwardly, so that the unrighteous might be terrified; here it was given inwardly, so that they might be justified... God's law, therefore, is love. To it the carnal mind is not subject, neither indeed can be; Romans 8:7 but when the works of love are written on tables to alarm the carnal mind, there arises the law of works and the letter which kills the transgressor; but when love itself is shed abroad in the hearts of believers, then we have the law of faith, and the spirit which gives life to him that loves."
 - i. 30 "The law was therefore given, in order that grace might be sought;"
 - b. Pelagianism
 - i. The difference between a little works, and pure faith was condemned as heresy.
5. 540-604AD - **Gregory the Great**
 - a. Homilies on Ezekiel "The law was given that sin might be restrained; grace was given that sin might be forgiven."

6. 1535AD - **Martin Luther**

- a. *Commentary on Galatians* "The Law says, Do this, and it is never done. Grace says, Believe in Christ, and everything is already done."
- b. *Luther's Works* vol. 26, 115 "Anyone who can distinguish the gospel from the law may thank God, and know that he is a true theologian...The proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel is the highest art in Christendom."
- c. This is *the* doctrine that launched the whole of the Reformation, for without it, Luther never would have come to his understanding of Scripture, the Church, and justification by faith.

7. 1560AD - **John Calvin**

- a. *Commentary on Romans* 10:5-9 "The law attributes righteousness to works, the Gospel bestows free righteousness apart from the help of works... This is an important passage, and one that can extricate us from many difficulties if we understand that that righteousness which is given to us through the gospel has been freed from all conditions of the law... Just as the Law demands work, the Gospel requires only that men should bring faith in order to receive the grace of God"
- b. *Commentary on Galatians* 3 "From the Law, therefore, it is useless to seek a blessing."

8. 1563AD - **John Fox** (*Fox's Book of Martyrs*)

- a. "There is nothing more comfortable for troubled consciences than to be instructed in the difference between the law and the gospel. The law shows us our sin. The Gospel shows us the remedy for it. The law shows us our condemnation, the gospel shows our redemption. The law is a word of ire, the gospel is a word of grace. The law is a word of despair, the gospel is a word of comfort. The law is a word of unrest, the gospel is a word of peace. The law says 'pay your debt!' The gospel says 'Christ has paid it!' The Law says 'you are a sinner, despair, you shall be damned.' The gospel says 'your sins are forgiven, be comforted, you are saved!' The law says 'where is your righteousness?!' The gospel says "Christ is your righteousness!"

9. 1600AD - **Theodore Beza** (successor to John Calvin in Geneva)

- a. *The Christian Faith* (1992) 40-41 "We divide this Word into two principal parts or kinds: the one is called the Law, the other the Gospel, for all the rest can be gathered together under one or the other of these headings. Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity."

10. 1645-1720 - **Edward Fisher/Thomas Boston**

- a. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*
 - i. 3 Divisions - 1) The Law of Works 2) the Law of Faith 3) The Law of Christ
- b. The Marrow Controversy 1717
 - i. Auchterarder Creed "It is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ."
- c. The Condemnation by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1720