

Law and Gospel

Good morning church! My name is Andrew Carpenter. I am from the United States of America and am friends with Mr. Rick and Mrs. Jennifer Irons. I have been a Christian for about 7 years and I love God and desire to make him known. I am studying the Bible at a Christian college to be a pastor but am still seeking God where He would like me to serve whether in America or in another country. Although I am from far away, it is a joy to know we are family through Christ. Proverbs 25:25 says, that “as cold water is to a weary soul, So is good news from a far country” It is a privilege to come from a distant land to bring the refreshing Word of God to the people of Opole. Today I will preach the gospel from the New Testament book of Romans today but first let us go to the Lord in prayer

Holy God, we come into your house today thankful Thankful that you have given us your Holy Word which is a lamp unto our feet Even when your law tell us that we have sinned and we are dirty Thank you that you also have made a way for us to be forgiven and washed. Our hearts feel guilt every day but your grace is greater than our sin Your mercies are new every morning Thank you Jesus for your gospel for leading us to Christ and awakening our faith May you use both your law and your gospel to lead us to the cross today. Amen.

It is such a joy to not only be hear fellowshiping and speaking with you today, but it is a joy to share in the Lord's Supper with you all. It is Christ's blood and body that washes away our sin and nourishes us. It is always such a sacred time to remember His sacrifice.

(Now you may open your Bibles to Romans 3:19-26)

Romans 3:19-26

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Most of us know these words law and gospel and we hear them all the time in Christian circles but what I would like for us to do today is to define them and learn what the purpose of the law is and the purpose of the gospel. **Zacharias Ursinus** said that the voices of law and gospel were the “chief and general divisions of Scripture”. They are two separate voices with distinct purposes. They both are crucial to our growth and as Christians we need to be able to distinguish between the two. We also need a balance of both in our preaching but today I will focus first on the purpose of the law since I think many times as Christians we do not know how to treat the law. We know the gospel and its saving power to meditate on and live in, but some of us disregard the law thinking that it was abolished after the Old Testament. To be sure much of the ceremonial laws and customs were temporary for the nation of Israel to set them apart, but by no means is God’s moral law abolished today. When Christ came on the scene He said, I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. So we will get to the purpose of the gospel but we first need to rightly understand the purpose of the law. In fact it is only fitting to understand the law before the gospel because that is the sequence in the book of Romans. The first 3 chapters are law and condemnation and then in chapter 4 it moves to gospel and hope.

When we think about the purpose of the laws of Poland we understand that they exist to keep the country safe. The law is used to discipline the wicked and through the knowledge that there is punishment, the government discourages people from breaking the law. Laws are a standard meant to show us what is good and to show us what is evil. When we are looking at God's Law, it shows us not only what is good but it actually shows us God’s very own character because He alone is Holy and is the standard of right and wrong. The law not only shows us who

God is but it tells us that we need to be holy just like God,.because he has said in Leviticus 19, “Be Holy for I am Holy.”

Again it says in Romans 3 verse 19 *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

This means not only that the law shows us we are not as Holy as God but that we are guilty because of it. In the Greek when it says that the world may become guilty before God it means literally that we are being brought to trial with God as our judge and His law being the sentencing authority. The Reformer John Calvin in his book *the Institutes of the Christian Religion* wrote that the law, “While it shows God’s righteousness, it also warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns every man of his own unrighteousness”. We have not only been brought to trial by God but under the authority of the law we are also condemned for our unrighteousness. This is not the end of the story but this is why verse 20 says, *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* We are pridefully kidding ourselves if we think that when we stand before God’s judgment seat and we have to give an account for ourselves that God will justify us and accept us based on our own good works. The law shows us that we are not holy like God and that we have sinned greatly. This verse says we cannot be accepted by God based on our own good works, because we are sinful people. Many people however still think that we can follow the law and earn our right standing with God. When you ask people why they think they are going to heaven many reply, “I have been a good person most of my life. I haven’t killed anybody or committed adultery”.But this chapter in previous verses tells us in verse 10-12 that “*There is none righteous, no, not one..They have all turned aside, there is none who does good, no not one*”. When we are tempted to think we are good people we must remember that God not just is weighing our actions and our deeds but our heart motives. The greatest two commandments according to Jesus which all the Law and Prophets rest on is this: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And You shall love your neighbor as yourself We all must admit that even on our best days, our hearts are not overflowing with love for God and love for others. This is why Romans 3 says that “*by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” because we *cannot* earn our way into God’s kingdom. Galatians 2:16 reiterates, *yet 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. So if we cannot be justified by our good works since we are sinners, how then can we be justified or in other words, be accepted as righteous since without holiness we cannot see the Lord? Well let us keep reading Romans for the answer.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

What does this mean? It means that even though we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God that we are accepted by God and counted as righteous, freely by His grace through our faith to all who believe. We do not have to work to be accepted more by God, all we have to do is believe in Jesus and accept His forgiving atonement on the cross for our sins. We can never become righteous by our works, that is why Jesus came to earth to live a perfect life, because he knew we could not. When we believe in God and His gospel by faith, Christ's righteousness and His fulfillment of the law is imputed and accounted unto us. Though most religions and sadly much of Christianity is only law based, preaching to us to try harder, to do better, to do do do, The gospel of Christianity tells us that it is finished and it is done through Christ. It is not that our works do not matter, but that when we are justified, Jesus' perfection is counted as ours, meaning that now regardless of our failures, sinners like you and I can have relationship with a Holy God.

So you may ask, if the law shows us a standard that we cannot keep then how is it useful for us today as Christians? Other than showing us the way of holiness and how we ought to walk, The answer in Romans 3 verse 20 is that the law gives us a knowledge of sin which leads us to confession of that sin. The law is like a flashlight shining over our dark hearts to reveal what is

on the inside. Or like a mirror which shows us exactly what our hearts are like. Many times I have been going about my day with feelings of guilt and anxiety and if someone were to ask me what the cause of these feelings were I would not be able explain to them why. Though that might sound odd to some I am sure that we all at some time or another have struggled with that. When Our heart and emotions are telling us something is wrong but we do not know exactly what sin to confess or how to repent. I told one of my Bible teachers in America this problem and My teacher encouraged me: read the law of the Lord and let it guide you as to how to confess your sins to the Lord. He recommended making reading the ten commandments a daily habit: and letting God's living Word remind me of what I need to confess to him. An example of how I do this is to read the law while praying for God to remind me through His Word how I can confess and repent of my sin. For example I will read a few verses of the ten commandments and show you how I do this.

Exodus 20:1-3 And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. And as I read this I would pray something like this: Heavenly Father you are the one who has delivered me and brought me out of spiritual captivity. You deserve my full devotion. Yet I have gone after other gods and other idols. I have been valuing other things more than you Especially here lately I have been making entertainment an idol and have cared about money more than I have about giving to those in need. I also have feared for the future so have been taking matters into my own hands because I have been trusting in myself more than you Lord. Forgive me and have mercy upon me. Thank you for your sacrifice that has bought the surety of my forgiveness. Amen. This is just one example of how I do this but of course our sins vary so much depending on our circumstances and weaknesses. You can really do this with any passage that is under the category of law: the most famous being the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Some people think that the Old Testament is full of law and the New Testament is full of gospel but the law and gospel permeate both Testaments inside and out. You really don't have to look hard to find either in the Bible.

The way to differentiate between the law and the gospel in the Bible is to ask yourself: Is this passage telling me God's standard and telling me do do do? Or is this good news telling me that in Christ it is done done done.

The purpose of the law also is to show us the need for a Savior and the gospel because we will realize when reading God's law that we have broken his standard. When we finally come to the point of acknowledging our sin and guilt, we then see that the only place to look for hope and forgiveness is in our Savior and in His gospel. Another important thing to remember is that we cannot just end with the reading of the law. The knowledge of sin is only a stepping stone towards the gospel. The law is glorious because it actually serves the purpose of leading us to Christ. Galatians is also a great book of the Bible to understand the purpose of the law. In chapter three of Galatians Paul speaks of the law being our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. If you think about it, a tutor is a helper and a guide to lead us to the right answers. Sometimes depending on how bad a student you are the tutor might have a lot of things to help you with, but nonetheless the point is that a tutor helps point us in the right direction towards the answer we are looking for. This is what the law does, it helps us rightly see our sin and guilt, it shows us we are in need of a Savior, and it points us to answer of the gospel of the cross where our sin is paid for and forgiven.

We have already seen how the law opens our eyes to see our hearts but now we will look at how the gospel opens our eyes to see our Savior. As we have already seen what the law is, now let us ask the question, what is the gospel? This is the most important question you could ever ask in your life. Without the answer to this question we are doomed. The answer is the gospel of Christianity is that because we needed a Savior, God sent Christ to earth to take on flesh to die a terrible death in our place and He rose again the third day purchasing our freedom from sin, thus restoring us back into relationship and union with Him. This gospel comes with no price tag. We do not have to work for it. It is FREE! FREE! FREE! We have access into this grace solely by faith alone. Isa 55 says, "Come Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money come buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price." When the law shows us we are bankrupt the gospel tells us we can come to the living water of God's presence and His gospel without price! But lets us look in even more detail, what is this this gospel that we have access to without price? In the Old Testament though the gospel was veiled it was still there in every page. In the Old Testament from the very beginning in the garden God promised that there would be one that would come to crush the head of the serpent, to destroy the power of Satan and sin through His sacrificial death and His glorious resurrection. He would come not only restore the beauty of His creation but He would

redeem His people and live with them forever. Though this gospel was not fully clear to God's people in the past, we now have a full view of the gospel **right here in God's revealed Holy Word**. In it we can read how God the Father Almighty is the creator of heaven and earth. We can read of His Incarnate Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. We can read of how Christ is our Prophet Priest and King, how He lived a perfect life according to the law, and then was led to a tree to bleed and suffer. We can read of how He was slain for the sins of the world, and after dying He was buried. We can read of how on the third day he rose triumphantly from the grave. We can read how he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father and of how He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. We can read of how His kingdom will have no end and how we His people will dwell with our King forever. We can read of the Holy Spirit how He is the giver of life and how He is the Comforter and Counselor of all who believe. We can read of the worldwide church, the bride of Christ, the fellowship of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection of the body,

.. to not see good news for us in this book is to be reading with blind eyes. The gospel is all over this book. All we have to do is open it and drink of it. It is living water for our souls.

Let us ask one last important question.. What is The ultimate purpose of this gospel? The purpose of this gospel is the glory of God.. It is to bring man back into a loving relationship with God so that he gets the glory for eternity. Without the gospel, man is left in the dark without the knowledge needed to trust in Christ. But with the gospel comes light, light to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There are millions living on earth right now without access to this good news and because of it they are living in the dark, are dying and are going to hell. They are without excuse Romans says because the law of God is written on their hearts. This should motivate us to take sharing the gospel seriously and pray for those going to unreached areas. But the gospel not only brings salvation, it brings comfort and restoration to the believer. There is never a time that the believer is too mature to hear and meditate on the gospel. We need the gospel not just to share to others, but for our own well being. His shed blood and His victorious resurrection show us that There is no substitute for this gospel because no other gospel can change us like this can. The world will try and try to tell us that this gospel will satisfy us or that gospel will satisfy us.. But when you experience the application of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to your life, there is no going back. You realize the power and the life in the gospel

and there is no substitute. So Let us daily read God's Word and rely on this gospel with every breath that we take and joyfully carry it to the world. Let us pray

Father thank you for your Word today which brings us life. Your law convicts us of our sin and leads us to repentance and renewal. Thank you for your gospel that brings us salvation and continual comfort. Thank you Father that you put forth your Son to be the propitiation for our sins, the sacrifice that absorbs all of the Father's wrath. Thank you that now that your anger has been spent on Christ, now you treat us with grace and mercy. Help us in our daily Bible reading to see how both your law and gospel lead us to life and union with you. Help us to share this gospel of life with others we meet along our way. In your mighty name I pray, Amen.