

The Lutheran Dilemma

The Central Problem

Lutherans rightly insist that salvation is:

- By **grace alone**
- Through **faith alone**
- Because of **Christ alone**

As a result, some conclude:

- Ethics is unimportant.
- Rules are inherently “legalistic.”
- Christians should simply “follow the Gospel.”

Law and Gospel Must Be Distinguished

One of Luther’s greatest theological contributions was distinguishing between **Law & Gospel**:

The Law:

- Commands.
- Directs.
- Instructs.
- Reveals God’s will.
- Shows sin.
- Guides Christian living.

The Gospel:

- Announces forgiveness.
- Gives Christ.
- Creates faith.
- Frees from condemnation.
- Makes sinners new.

The Gospel is **NOT** another set of commands or an ethical system that tells you what to do.

Ethics Belongs to the Law

Because ethics concerns: Human actions, Decisions, Conduct, Daily living

Ethics necessarily belongs to the realm of God’s Law. Ethics is about:

- What Christians **do**.
- How Christians **live**.
- How **God’s will** shapes **daily life**.

The Problem of “Hyper-Lutheranism”

Some Christians say:

- “The Gospel guides me.”
- “The Gospel tells me how to live.”

This confuses Law and Gospel. Instead, each has its own proper work:

- The **Law** teaches.
- The **Gospel** forgives.

Recovering a Positive View of the Law

Many Lutherans instinctively hear “Law” as something negative, but in Scriptures the Law is:

- God’s will.
- God’s wisdom.
- God’s instruction.
- God’s design for human flourishing.

Christians should NOT fear God’s Law but **receive it as a gift from a loving Father**.

The 3 Uses of the Law

1st Use: Restrains outward sin in society

2nd Use: Shows people their sin and drives them to Christ.

3rd Use: Guides believers in thankful Christian living. This is especially important for ethics.

Ethics After Justification

A Christian’s ethical life does **NOT** earn salvation. Instead:

1. **Christ** justifies sinners.
2. The **Gospel** creates faith.
3. The **forgiven Christian** desires to live according to God’s will.
4. The **Law** teaches what that faithful life looks like.

Thus: **Good works flow *from* faith** rather than producing faith.

Law & Gospel Work Together and should NOT be Confused

The Law

- Commands.
- Exposes sin.
- Directs life.

The Gospel

- Forgives.
- Restores.
- Gives new life.

Removing either one distorts Christianity.

Article IV of The Augsburg Confession Teaches

- We are **justified** freely by God's grace.
- **Forgiveness** comes through Christ's death and resurrection.
- **Faith** receives this gift apart from works.

Because our **salvation is already secure in Christ**, Christians are now free to learn God's will without fear.

Because:

- **God cares** how His children live.
- The **Law reveals** His good design.
- **Christian obedience flows** from gratitude rather than fear.

Each has its own proper work Ethics therefore becomes a **joyful response to God's grace**.