

# *Law and Gospel – Session 1*

## **1. Introduction:**

a. Martin Luther summed up the reason Lutherans have emphasized both Law **AND** Gospel. “The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Saviour of man the sinner.”

b. This statement was made by a mature Martin Luther, a former monk, priest, and professor of theology. But earlier in his career, all of his training and trying had left him terrified. Luther felt he couldn’t do enough to save himself through piety. He was afraid because he had been trained to understand, value, and fear the law, but he knew very little about the Gospel.

2. Let’s start with a few simple yet critical opening questions.

a. In simple terms, what is the Law?

b. In similarly simple terms, what is the Gospel?

c. Law and Gospel is a concept that is best when in proper balance.

d. What happens if the Law is overly stressed?

e. What happens if the Gospel is overly emphasized?

f. Why are both Law and Gospel needed?

3. Now let’s dive a little deeper. Why do we say Law and Gospel and not Gospel and Law? Let’s look at the passage below from Chapter 7 of Paul’s letter to the Romans to reveal some answers.

a. Romans 7:1-2, “Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.”

1) Under what condition is the Law binding (v1)?

2) When is this binding released (v2)?

b. Romans 7:4, “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.”

1) How are we released from the binding of the Law (v4)?

2) What does our death to the Law allow (v4b)?

3) For what purpose are we released (v4c)?

c. Romans 7:6, “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

1) Now that we are released, what are we able to do (v6b)?

2) What is the new way in which we can serve? What was the “old way” (v6b)?

d. All of this raises an important question that Paul asks in Romans 7:7, “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.”

1) Can people act in a sinful way without recognizing it as sin?

2) How do we come to distinguish sin (v7b)?

e. Romans 7:9, “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

a) In this context, what does Paul mean by being “apart from the law” (v7)?

b) What caused sin to come alive, that is, for Paul to be aware of his sin (v7b)?

c) What was the result of Paul’s awareness of his sinfulness (v7c)?

f. We will pick up with Romans Chapter 7 next time. But we can’t leave our discussion with a sense of hopelessness, so consider Ephesians 2:1-7, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”