

## SECOND EVENING LECTURE.

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MY FRIENDS: —

A person may pretend to be a Christian while in reality he is not. As long as he is in this condition, he is quite content with his knowledge of the mere outlines of the Christian doctrines. Everything beyond that, he says, is for pastors and theologians. To perceive as clearly as possible everything that God has revealed, that is something in which a non-Christian has no interest. However, the moment a person becomes a Christian, there arises in him a keen desire for the doctrine of Christ. Even the most uncultured peasant who is still unconverted is suddenly roused in the moment of his conversion and begins to reflect on God and heaven, salvation and damnation, etc. He becomes occupied with the highest problems of human life.

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An instance of this kind is afforded by those Jews who flocked to Christ and also by the apostles. Those multitudes heard Christ with great joy and were astonished because He preached with authority and not as the scribes. But the majority of these hearers never advanced beyond a certain feeling of delight and admiration. The apostles, too, were uneducated people, but they acted differently. They did not stop where the rest stopped, but propounded all manner of questions to Christ. After hearing one of His parables, they said: "Declare unto us this parable." Matt. 13, 36. Similar to this was the conduct of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily. Acts 17, 11. It is, therefore, quite true what the *Apology* says: "Men of good conscience are crying for the truth and proper instruction from the Word of God. Even death is not as bitter to them as when they find themselves in doubt regarding this matter or that. Accordingly, they must seek where they can find instruction." (Mueller, p. 191; *Triglot Concordia*, p. 290.)

Striving to obtain the truth and divine assurance is a necessary criterion already of an ordinary Christian, in a still higher degree, however, in the case of a theologian. A theologian who has not the greatest interest in the Christian doctrines is unthinkable. Even where there is but the beginning of faith in the heart, a person regards no point of doctrine as trifling, and every doctrine is to him as precious as gold, silver, and rubies. God grant that this may be your case! If it is, you will not come surfeited into these lectures, but will ask again and again, "What is truth?" — not in the spirit of Pilate, but of Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened raptly to every word He spoke. Then, too, every one of these lectures will be of great blessing to you, even though the instrument through which the truth is to be conveyed to you is inferior.

Now, the first matter that you are to consider is the points of difference between these two doctrines, the Law and the Gospel. We have heard that there are six points of difference, four of which we have reviewed. Let us pass on to the fifth point.

The fifth point of difference between the Law and the Gospel concerns the *effects* of these two doctrines. What is the effect of the preaching of the Law? It is threefold. In the first place, the Law tells us what to do, but does not enable us to comply with its commands; it rather causes us to become more unwilling to keep the Law. True, some treat the Law as if it were a rule in arithmetic. However, let the Law once force its way into a person's heart, and that heart will strain with all its force against God. The person will become furious at God for asking such impossible things of him. Yea, he will curse God in his heart. He would slay God if he could. He would thrust God from His throne if that were possible. The effect of preaching the Law, then, is to increase the lust for sinning.

In the second place, the Law uncovers to man his sins, but offers him no help to get out of them and thus hurls man into despair.

In the third place, the Law does indeed produce contrition. It conjures up the terrors of hell, of death, of the wrath of God. But it has not a drop of comfort to offer the sinner. If no additional teaching, besides the Law, is applied to man, he must despair, die, and perish in his sins. Ever since the Fall the Law can produce no other effects in man. Let us ponder this well.

That this is so we can see from Rom. 7, 7–9, where Paul relates his personal experience under the Law thus: *I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead. ... But when the commandment came, sin revived.*

No heathen knows that even evil lust in the heart is sin. The greatest moralists have said: "It is not my fault that I sin; I cannot help it; I cannot prevent myself from sinning." But the Law shouts: "Thou shalt not covet! Thou shalt not lust!" Yea, we are told that we must be free even from inherited lust.

While a person gives no thought to the Law, sin goes in and out at his heart, and he is not conscious of sinning. Ask a worldly person about this matter, and he will be surprised and say: "I have done no evil. I have slain no one; I have not committed adultery; I have not been a thief"; etc. He is not noticing at all that sin is a constant guest with him. But when the Law strikes him like a bolt of lightning, he perceives how great a sinner he is, what horribly ungodly thoughts he is cherishing. That is what the apostle means when he says, "Sin revived," when the Law came.

The Law uncovers sin, but offers us no comfort. If we had the Law only — as we have it now — and nothing besides, we should have to perish forever and go to hell. The smiting effects and the curse of the divine Law will first be felt in hell; for the Law must be fulfilled; it must preserve its divine authority.

Take 2 Cor. 3, 6, where we read: *The letter killeth.* The apostle calls the Law "the letter" because God has inscribed it in the form of letters upon tables of stone. Even pagans have observed that the Law produces an effect opposite to that which it commands. The statement of the profligate poet Ovid is well known: *Nitimur in vetitum, semper cupimusque negata* ("We

strive after the forbidden thing and always lust after those things which are denied us”). Ovid himself was a swine, and he says bluntly: “See, this is how I do: I always do those things which others regard as forbidden.”

When the Israelites, at Mount Sinai, were given the Ten Commandments, they were all a-tremble. Their natural behavior revealed the condition of their hearts. On that occasion God wanted to point out to us for all time to come: Behold, that is the effect of the Law! Accordingly, when the rich young man came to Christ, asking how he might be saved, and was so utterly blind that he did not at all perceive his sinful corruption, we are told: *He went away sorrowful*. Matt. 19, 22. Christ could not yet apply the Gospel to this young man; He first had to convince him that he was utterly incapable of fulfilling the Law. Again, when Paul preached to Felix, the governor, concerning righteousness, temperance, and the Judgment to come, we read that *Felix trembled and answered, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”* Acts 24, 25. But he never called for Paul again; he wanted to be rid of the thunder and lightning of the Law. Again, when Peter on the first Christian festival of Pentecost had preached the Law to his hearers, we are told that *they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* namely, to be saved. Then Peter said to them: *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

The effects of the Gospel are of an entirely different nature. They consist in this, that, in the first place, the Gospel, when demanding faith, offers and gives us faith in that very demand. When we preach to people: Do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gives them faith through our preaching. We preach faith, and any person not wilfully resisting obtains faith. It is, indeed, not the mere physical sound of the spoken Word that produces this effect, but the contents of the Word.

The second effect of the Gospel is that it does not at all reprove the sinner, but takes all terror, all fear, all anguish, from him and fills him with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. At the return of the prodigal the father does not with a single word refer to his horrible, abominable conduct. He says nothing, nothing whatever, about it, but falls upon the prodigal’s neck, kisses him, and prepares a splendid feast for him. That is a glorious parable exhibiting to us the effect of the Gospel. It removes all unrest and fills us with a blessed, heavenly peace.

In the third place, the Gospel does not require anything good that man must furnish: not a good heart, not a good disposition, no improvement of his condition, no godliness, no love either of God or men. It issues no orders, but it changes man. It plants love into his heart and makes him capable of all good works. It demands nothing, but it gives all. Should not this fact make us leap for joy?

The effects of the Gospel are exhibited to us Acts 16, in the case of the jailer of Philippi. He asked Paul and Silas: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* and received this answer: *Believe on the*

*Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.* The jailer does not say to the apostles: How am I to go at this? No; he promptly believes, for the apostles' words have spoken faith into his heart. The story concerning him goes on immediately: *He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.* Observe that the Gospel bestows the faith which it demands. In the demand for faith there is nothing of the nature of the Law; it is a demand of love.

Rom. 1, 16 Paul says: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Here we have a record of something glorious. Can there be anything more glorious, more beautiful, more blessed, more precious, than what the Gospel gives - eternal salvation?

Eph. 2, 8-10 we have a brief description of The Gospel as seen in its effects. The apostle says: *By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* The Gospel does not say: You must do good works, but it fashions me into a human being, into a creature of such a kind as cannot but serve God and his fellow-man. Verily, a precious effect!

To the renegade Galatians, Paul appears in Gal. 3, 2, saying: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith?* Of course, they had to answer: "It was through the preaching of faith which we heard that we were given a new heart; for prior to that we could do no good. We have been made over into new creatures." You do not have to tell the sun to shine, and it would be just as useless to say to one of those new creatures: You must do this or that.

Finally, there is a sixth point of difference between the Law and the Gospel: it relates to the *persons* to whom either doctrine is to be preached. In other words, there is a difference in the subjects to whom they must be applied. The persons on whom either doctrine is to operate, and the end for which it is to operate, are utterly different. The Law is to be preached to secure sinners and the Gospel to alarmed sinners. In other respects both doctrines must indeed be preached, but at this point the question is: which are the persons to whom the Law must be preached rather than the Gospel? and *vice versa*.

1 Tim. 1, 8-10 Paul writes: *We know that the Law is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.* To all persons of this description, then, the Law *only* is to be preached, and they are not to have a drop of Gospel. As long as a person is at ease in his sins, as long as he is unwilling to quit some particular sin, so long only the Law, which curses and condemns him, is to be preached to him. However, the moment he becomes frightened at his condition, the Gospel is to be promptly administered to him; for from that moment on he no longer can be classified with

secure sinners. Accordingly, while the devil holds you in a *single* sin, you are not yet a proper subject for the Gospel to operate upon; only the Law must be preached to you.

A prophetic utterance of our Lord prior to His incarnation was cited by Him afterwards in the days of His flesh. Luke 4, 16–21. It is found Is. 61, 1–3: *Thy Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* The “day of vengeance of our God” in this test is the judgment which God is to execute upon hell and the devil. Can there be a more glorious message than this? The devil has horribly disfigured the human race and hurled men into deep distress. Christ has avenged this. He has proclaimed to the devil: “I have conquered thee, and men, created after the image of God, shall not be lost. I have procured salvation for them.” Only those perish who absolutely refuse to be saved; for God coerces no one in this matter.

Now, to such poor, sad-hearted sinners — I repeat it — not a word of the Law must be preached. Woe to the preacher who would continue to preach the Law to a famished sinner! On the contrary, to such a person the preacher must say: “Do but come! There is still room! No matter how great a sinner you are, there is still room for you. Even if you were a Judas or a Cain, there is still room. Oh, do, do come to Jesus!” Persons of this kind are proper subjects on whom the Gospel is to operate.

Let me now cite to you a passage from Luther’s *Sermon on the Distinction between the Law and the Gospel*. He writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 802f.): “By the term ‘Law’ nothing else is to be understood than a word of God that is a command, that enjoins upon us what we are to do and what we are to shun, that requires from us some work of obedience. This is easily understood when we look only at the form of speech in which God expresses a certain word if His (*in causa formali*), but it is very difficult in the execution (*in causa finali*). Now, there are many kinds of laws or commandments that refer to works which God requires of each person individually, according to his natural disposition, his standing in society, his office, and according to the particular season and other circumstances that have a bearing on the doing of such works. Hence the commandments tell each man what tasks God has laid on him, and what He requires of him, agreeably to his natural disposition and his office. For instance, a wife must tend her children and let the master of the house do the governing, etc. That is the task required of her. A servant is to obey his master and do all other things which it behooves a servant to do. In like manner a maidservant has a law to govern her conduct. However, the universal law that pertains to all of us is this, Matt. 22, 39: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’; give him advice and aid in any emergency; if he is hungry, feed him; if he is naked, clothe him, and so on. This is properly

delimiting the Law and sequestering it from the Gospel. Law is to be called and to be, anything that refers to what we are to do. On the other hand, the Gospel, or the Creed, is any doctrine or word of God which does not require works from us and does not command us to do something, but bids us simply accept as a gift the gracious forgiveness of our sins and everlasting bliss offered us. In accepting these gifts, we surely are not doing anything; we merely receive, we merely suffer to be given to us, what is given and presented to us by means of the Word, as when God gives you a promise like this: I make thee a present of this or that, etc. For instance, in Holy Baptism, which I have not ordained and which is not my work, but the word and work of God, He says to me: Come hither; I baptize thee and wash thee from all thy sins. Accept this gift, and it shall be thine. Now, when you are thus baptized, what else do you do than receive and accept a gracious gift?

“The difference, then, between the Law and the Gospel is this: The Law makes demands of things that we are to do; it insists on works that we are to perform in the service of God and our fellow-men. In the Gospel, however, we are summoned to a distribution of rich alms which we are to receive and take: the loving-kindness of God and eternal salvation. Here is an easy way of illustrating the difference between the two: In offering us help and salvation as a gift and donation of God, the Gospel bids us hold the sack open and have something given us. The Law, however, gives nothing, but only takes and demands things from us. Now, these two, giving and taking, are surely far apart. For when something is given me, I am not doing anything towards that: I only receive and take; I have something given me. Again, when in my profession I carry out commands, likewise when I advise and assist my fellow-man, I receive nothing, but give to another whom I am serving. Thus the Law and the Gospel are distinguished as to their formal statements (*in causa formali*): the one promises, the other commands. The Gospel gives and bids us take; the Law demands and says, This you are to do.”

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We note that Luther does not develop this doctrine in scientific fashion, but he proclaims it like a prophet. That is why he makes such a great impression. If he had written a scientific treatise in Latin on this subject with systematic divisions and subdivisions marked A, a, a, **⚡**, b, a, **⚡**, c, a, **⚡**, B, a, etc., the people would have marveled and said, “That man is a great scholar,” but he would not by this method have made the impression which he did make.

In the writings of the Church Fathers we find hardly anything concerning the distinction between the Law and the Gospel.