

The Law in Light of the Gospel

If we were not sinners by nature, the proclamation of the law would not be necessary, because we would by nature do the things that are pleasing to God. However, since we are sinful, the law shows us what life should be in a twisted and sinful world that we are living in with a twisted and sinful heart.

Now, the law describes for us the way that a sinner by nature should approach God in the light of what Christ has done. Paul refers to the “law of Christ” in I Corinthians 9:21.

- The law shows us that we ought not try to achieve righteousness through the law.
- The law tells us that we should rest in the finished work of Christ.
- The law says that we ought to avail ourselves to the means of forgiveness available in the sacraments.
- The law says we should keep the gospel pure.
- The law says that we should correctly handle the word, not blending the law and the gospel.
- The law says that we should acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the reason the gospel has advanced in the world, reaching even us.
- The law says we should not confuse the unfinished work of the Holy Spirit here on earth **in** us with the finished work Christ did **for** us on the cross.
- The law says that we should acknowledge that God has chosen us, not that we have chosen God.

The list above, of course, is not a complete list.

When we have to refuse fellowship with others because we believe that they are promoting false teachings about the nature of salvation or the sacraments, we are actually refusing fellowship based upon a form of the law. We believe that the church should be promoting the message of the cross. We see others who seem to be promoting a message of assurance of salvation based on conversion or “a personal relationship with Christ”. Our message to them is really a form of the law, stating that they should change.

For those who are determined to find a way that they can contribute to salvation, they will take the teaching that they **can** do nothing and make it into the teaching that they **must** do nothing. They will make a work out of it and take pride in doing nothing. Even that isn't how God brings a person to salvation. Really, only God can bring a person to the point where he realizes (through the message of the law and the gospel) that he cannot meet the conditions God demands and that it must be by mercy.

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