

# The History of the Reformation...



HOW CHRIST  
RESTORED  
THE GOSPEL  
TO HIS  
CHURCH

## The Law and the Gospel...

### Martin Luther

For ten weeks now we have been examining the history of the Reformation and our primary focus has been on Martin Luther and Martin Luther's life. This morning, however, I want to focus more on his theology and less on any one historical event. I think it is important that we do that at least for one lesson and the reason that is important is because Luther's theological breakthroughs are what really fueled the Reformation in its early stages.

Luther's principal theological breakthrough concerned the doctrine of justification. We have talked about that in some of our other lessons but you need to know and you need to remember that Luther's restoration of the biblical doctrine of justification was his one great principal contribution.

Luther believed the doctrine of justification to be the central focus of all of theology. He called it the article by which the church stands or falls. In other words, Luther believed that if you get the doctrine of justification wrong you

don't even have a church. Later on, Calvin would say much the same thing. He called the doctrine of justification the hinge on which all of religion turns.

Luther's second contribution to the church was his doctrine of consubstantiation. Now you will remember that we talked about the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation. That is, we talked about the fact that when a priest took bread and wine and elevated and consecrated them in the mass he believed it actually became the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Now the outward form was retained. What had been bread still looked like bread, smelled like bread and tasted like bread but in their view it was changed...actually transformed into the body and blood of Jesus.

Now it is difficult for us as Protestants to understand this view. But to show you how important it is you ought to know that when you see people in a Catholic Church go down to the front and kneel and cross themselves it is because they are showing what they believe to be a proper worshipful response to the presence of the body of Christ. In other words, they are adoring or worshipping the Lord Jesus. The reason they do that is because they believe the bread and wine have actually, really and truly, metaphysically become the body and blood of Christ.

You remember that Huss and Wycliffe rejected the idea that the bread in communion ceases to be bread. That was problem for Luther as well. He did not believe that the bread ceased to be bread. But he still believed that Jesus was really present in the elements. The way he handled the issue was with his doctrine of consubstantiation. Luther said that Christ was really present in the bread. He was in, under, with and through the bread but Luther did not believe

that the bread ceased to be bread. He transformed the doctrine of transubstantiation into the doctrine of consubstantiation. That was really different. Of course, since then...most of the Protestant world has gone so far as to say that the bread is bread and only bread. But Luther would have disagreed with that. He would have said Christ is truly present but the bread is still bread.

Now his third contribution and this is one very few people know about was Luther's theology of the cross and though we're not going to have the time to flesh that out I thought I might make a recommendation for those of you that might want to do some reading on the subject. This is Alister McGrath's book, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. Now what Luther argued is that if you want to understand God rightly...if you really want to understand how God has revealed himself...you ought not look to the grand and glorious but to the poor and the humble and weak. In other words, God reveals himself in the mountains and oceans and forests but not in the same way that he revealed himself in the incarnation. Luther said that the truest revelation of God was in the most humble place, the most despised place of all...the cross. It is a wonderful idea...I think. You see what Luther said is that the greatest revelation of God was in the dirt, blood, sweat and death of Jesus on the cross. Luther's conclusion based on that is that Christians ought not to be people who are striving to exalt themselves. Instead we ought to be humble servants content to live our lives in obscurity and service to others. You can see it s a wonderful way to view the Christian life.

Then fourthly...and this is what we want to focus on this morning...is Luther's concept of law and gospel. I hope to show you as we go through the lesson why his doctrine of law and gospel was so important.

First, you need to remember that up until Luther it was very unusual for any private person to own a Bible. Now because of that the issue of hermeneutics (how a person interprets the Bible) hardly ever came up.

But when Luther came along and translated the Bible into German and put it into the hands of the people, it became a very important issue. The question then became for the common man, "**How do I interpret the Bible?**"

Do you see why that would matter?

In other words, "**When I read 1 Chronicles or 2 Kings or Judges how do I interpret the text so that I can see Christ in the text?**" Do you see why that matters?

Luther's summed up his answer to that question in the phrase "**law and gospel**".

Now what we are going to talk about this morning is what Luther meant by law and gospel and to do that we are going to turn to John 7:45. So turn there in your Bibles and we'll look at the passage together and then we'll come back to our discussion of what law and gospel means and how Luther developed the concept.

All right then, here we go.

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 7:45**...The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "**Why did you not bring Him?**" <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "**Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.**" <sup>47</sup> The Pharisees therefore answered them, "**You have not also been led**

astray, have you? <sup>48</sup> **No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?** <sup>49</sup> **But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.** <sup>50</sup> Nicodemus said to them, <sup>51</sup> **"Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"** <sup>52</sup> They answered and said to him, **"You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."** <sup>53</sup> *And everyone went to his home.* <sup>NAS</sup> **John 8:1...** But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. <sup>3</sup> And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, <sup>4</sup> they said to Him, **"Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup> Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"** <sup>6</sup> And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. <sup>7</sup> But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, **"He who is without sin among you, let him *be the first to throw a stone at her.*"** <sup>8</sup> And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> And when they heard it, they *began* to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. <sup>10</sup> And straightening up, Jesus said to her, **"Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"** <sup>11</sup> And she said, **"No one, Lord."** And Jesus said, **"Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more."**

Now the point I want to make this morning...the point that Luther would start with...is that God's Holy Word, the Scripture, is divided into two parts. Now we all know that. Almost any child gathered here this morning to worship with their parents could tell us that. They could tell that the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. They could tell us that the Old Testament is the part of Scripture written before the coming of the Messiah, and that the New Testament is the part of Holy Writ given to us after the incarnation of God's eternal Son. But Luther said that there is another method of dividing Scripture. A method that was even more basic than the divisions of Old

Testament and the New Testament. Luther believed that division to be Law and Gospel.

Luther wrote:

This difference between the Law and the Gospel is the height of knowledge in Christendom. Every person and all persons who assume or glory in the name of Christian should be able to state this difference. If this ability is lacking, one cannot tell a Christian from a heathen or a Jew; of such supreme importance is this differentiation. This is why St. Paul so strongly insists on a clean-cut and proper delineation between these two doctrines.

But Luther wasn't alone in his view. Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva, wrote this:

We divide this Word into two principal parts or kinds: the one is called the "**Law**", the other the "**Gospel**". For all the rest can be gathered under the one or other of these two headings...Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity.

Three hundred years later, Charles Spurgeon, the great reformed Baptist preacher of London, said this:

There is no point on which men make greater mistakes than on the relation which exists between the law and the gospel.

And finally, J.T. Mueller the great Lutheran theologian wrote this:

The distinction between the Law and the Gospel, which is so clearly taught in Holy Scripture, the Christian must conscientiously observe. (He) must neither weaken the condemning force of the Law nor diminish the saving comfort of the Gospel. Unless the Law and the Gospel are thus

preached...the Christian religion is deprived of its distinct content, is paganized by the introduction of works-righteousness as the cause of salvation, and is thereby rendered incapable of saving sinners.

No I hope you can see that group of men cuts across the Reformed tradition. Whenever you have that many good men from that many different traditions saying the same thing...it is probably important. So, what I want to do this morning in light of their testimony to the importance of the law and gospel is to take a couple of minutes and explain what they mean by law and gospel. Then I would like to go back to the passage we read and illustrate how our Lord Himself used the difference.

Now to start, the reformers often spoke of the three uses of the law. The understood the first use of the law to be the civil use of the law by which government preserves order in society. That is, the government uses the law to condemn and judge murder, adultery, theft and so on...in order to promote peace and order in the world.

The third use of the law is specifically for believers. It guides believers in terms of how we should live. It teaches us to love other, to honor our parents, to keep the Sabbath, to not covet, etc. It pushes us along in our sanctification.

But the second use of the law is the most important use. It is for all men. It condemns sin. It condemns all men of their failure to live righteously before a Holy God. It is intended to push them to despair concerning their sin and cause them to flee to Christ.

That is what Paul had in mind in Galatians 3, when he wrote:

<sup>NAS</sup> **Galatians 3:23**...But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.

Now the image of a tutor was different in Paul's day than in ours.

In Paul's day a tutor had much more authority than a modern teacher has. Some ancient art actually show tutors with sticks or clubs, flogging his rebellious students to do their lessons. You see the ancient tutor was a tyrant, unbending, unyielding, never sleeping, never showing mercy.

Now imagine, young people if teachers were like that today. Imagine that every time you made a mistake they were there with a switch or a cane to drive you to do better. And imagine that instead of having your parents there or the police there to protect you, they were standing in the background smiling saying "**Hit him again...hit him again...he still hasn't gotten it.**" You see that is what the law does. It never sleeps, never naps, never blinks. It's always there to lash out, to wound, to show our utter inability, to drive us to despair of ourselves.

The reformers had a phrase for it: "*Lex Semper accusat.*"

This is what they meant. The law always accuses. It only accuses. It never cuts any slack. It never confirms our righteousness, it only confirms our failure. Let's take one of the Ten Commandments as an example. The Sixth Commandment commands, "**Thou shalt not murder**". At first glance, we might say to ourselves, "**All right, I believe what you've said about the Law but you've picked one of**

**the two or three commandments that I haven't violated. I've never murdered anyone. I'm innocent."**

That's what the Pharisees were thinking when Jesus gave His explanation of the Law in Mathew 5.

**<sup>NAS</sup> Matthew 5:21..."You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER 'and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' <sup>22</sup> "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court, and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca, 'shall be guilty before the supreme court, and whoever shall say, 'You fool, 'shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."**

You can see how Jesus applied the command to their sinful hearts in such a way as to show them their guilt.

Luther wrote this:

The law is the Word in which God teaches and tells us what we are to do and not to do, as in the Ten Commandments. Now wherever human nature is alone, without the grace of God, the Law cannot be kept, because since Adam's fall in paradise man is corrupt and has nothing but a wicked desire to sin and in his heart cannot be favorably disposed toward the Law, as we know by our own experience...And this difficulty or this unwillingness to do what is good prevents us from keeping God's Law; for what is kept with dislike, difficulty, and unwillingness, rates before God as not having been kept at all. And so the Law of God convinces us by our experience that we are naturally wicked, disobedient, lovers of sin, and enemies of God's commandments.

And you know what? He is exactly right.

That is why whenever the Pharisees resisted the condemnation of the Law, Jesus simply moved the standard up higher and higher until they were willing to their guilt before God. Basically, Jesus was saying, **"You Pharisees, you think the command not to murder means not to plunge a knife into your enemies heart. But it means a lot more than that. I'm saying that whenever you lay awake at night thinking of ways of getting even or exacting vengeance you are doing the same thing. I'm saying that your words of belittlement or mockery are the same thing as committing murder."**

Now, theologians call their understanding of what Jesus was doing with Pharisees the **"alien work of Christ"**. I think that is wonderfully descriptive term. You see, it was His **"alien work"** because it was not his principal work. Jesus Himself declared that he came not to condemn sinners but to save sinners. Nevertheless, he sometimes had to drive men to despair of their own self-righteousness in order to prepare them for salvation.

He did the same kind of thing with the Pharisees with the topic of adultery.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 5:27**..."You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY',<sup>28</sup> but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

You see, Jesus never took away the necessity of obedience to the external aspects of the Law. No, he simply clarified the demands that the Law made. He removed the Pharisees' confidence in the flesh. Some theologians that when Jesus did that he was acting like Moses to the fourth power. I like that, I understand that... Moses times Moses times Moses times Moses. For those that were saying, **"All right, I admit that I have failed to keep the law externally,**

**but I've kept it in my heart."** Jesus was saying, "**Man don't you understand your heart has committed sins that your hands just haven't gotten around to...**"

You see he was applying the law to their hearts to drive them to despair of their own righteousness.

But back to my point, there are two words in Scripture, the Law and the Gospel. The Law is bigger than the Ten Commandments. The Law is found everywhere in the Bible. Any place that makes a command is Law, any place where an imperative is given that we may fail to keep, that is Law. Let me show you a few law passages:

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 5:25**...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;

Now brothers, does that speak peace to your heart or condemn you? I think it condemns us because we don't do what the passage says. Luther would say, **"That's right. It is a law passage."**

There are many others. Listen to this one.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 5:22**...Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

And this one:

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 6:1**...Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

Now obviously that is law. It quotes one of the Ten Commandments. But he others are law as well in that they condemn our sin.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 6:4**...And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Now there is not a mom or a dad here that isn't smitten in hearing that and the reason it condemns us is because we have not kept it. That is what the law does and when we contemplate that we realize we are not right with God and that is the point Luther was trying to make. That is what the law does. It demands of us that which we are unable to do.

Listen to this from...

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Thessalonians 5:16**...Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Now are always rejoicing? Of course, you are not.

Are you always praying? Of course, you are not.

Still, isn't that what we are to do? Yes, it is. Now, you may be thinking if those are commands that I must obey to be pleasing to God, I'm doomed.

Luther would say, "**You are beginning to understand the problem.**"

Still when we think to ourselves, "**Pray without ceasing, Father's don't provoke your children unto wrath, children honor your parents, wives subject yourself to your husbands, and husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church.**"

The first question that usually comes to our mind is, "**Are you serious?**"

The Law answers back, "**Yes, absolutely.**"

Then our heart longs to excuse itself and thinks, "**No one can keep all those things. No one can meet the expectations of the Law.**"

Luther would say, "**That's exactly right.**"

But the law has fallen on hard times. The modern church has forgotten the Law. It no longer teaches the demands of the Law. It no longer stresses the impossible standard that the Law holds us to. Instead, it seeks to be relevant, not realizing that God has the Law and the Gospel to convict men of their sin and to turn their hearts to Christ. Today, the church seeking to be relevant does exactly what H. Richard Niebuhr accused the liberal church of his generation of doing. It proclaims:

...A God without wrath bringing men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministry of a Christ without a Cross.

I love that. I think he had it exactly right and yet it makes me tremble for the church today. We must let the law have its full weight.

The Gospel, on the other hand, is pure offer. It doesn't demand anything. It doesn't ask us to do anything. It is pure offer.

Here's what I mean.

The Law says, "**Do not commit murder, by that I mean do not hate anyone, do not seek vengeance, do not scheme revenge, do not slander or liable anyone because of your anger.**"

We say, **"We are doomed, we cannot keep your demands."**

But the Gospel says, **"Someone has kept it in your place."**

The Law says, **"Children obey your parents. Children honor your parents, when they are wrong, when they are thoughtless, or too harsh. Listen intently to their wisdom, reverence them as the authority given you in this life. Do not speak harshly of them. Provide for them financially when they are old."**

We say, **"We are doomed, doomed, doomed."**

But the Gospel says, **"Someone has kept it in your place."**

The Gospel is pure offer. Listen to these gospel passages where our Lord says:

<sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 11:28...**"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 7:37...** Jesus stood and cried out, saying, **"If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"**

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 5:24...**"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Now let me ask you, **"Does that make you feel bad or does that comfort your heart?"** It comforts your heart because it tells you what Christ has done for you.

You see that is how Luther says you need to understand the Bible. Does it condemn you or does it speak peace to you. The answer to that question tells you whether it is law or it is gospel.

You see the Gospel is about what Christ has done on our behalf. He bore the penalty of our failure to keep God's Law. Our sin was put on His account. So on the cross, Jesus bore the penalty for murderous thoughts and actions, for our adulterous lusts and lewd behavior. He suffered for rebelliousness towards our parents, our covetousness, our Sabbath breaking. He removed God's wrath from us, He propitiated or turned aside God's white hot anger. And because He did that and because He lived a righteous holy life before God, keeping all of God's commandments in their fullest form, God has imputed His righteousness to us. His righteousness covers our own sinful behavior. We are clothed in His righteousness, not as if we had never sinned but as if we had always been fully and completely obedient.

That is why the passage at hand this morning is so remarkable. It contains both the Law and Gospel. It contains the Law for the unrepentant and it contains the Gospel for the one crushed by the weight of their own sinfulness.

Let's look at it again.

**<sup>NAS</sup> John 7:47...The Pharisees therefore answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? <sup>48</sup> No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? <sup>49</sup> But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed."**

You see the smug arrogance of the Pharisees. They claimed no one else knew the Law the way they did. They cursed the profane among them. They knew God

loved the righteous, therefore they pronounced themselves righteous, and thinking they were following God they loved themselves.

So when they come to Jesus, He gave them what they need. They come with impure motives to trap Him. They care nothing for this wretched woman taken in adultery. She is not among the righteous. She is simply a pawn to be manipulated and disposed of. John writes in John 8:3:

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 8:3**...And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, <sup>4</sup> they said to Him, "**Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.** <sup>5</sup> **Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?**" <sup>6</sup> And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. <sup>7</sup> But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**"

Is that law or gospel? It was law and it condemned them the same way it condemns us. You see our Lord knew what they needed and gave them what they had to have to lead them to repentance.

If you are here this morning feeling self-confident about your own righteousness, oblivious to the impossible standard God has set before us; Luther would say this is word for you. He would say, "**I beg you; I implore you to examine yourself and your self-confidence in the light of God's holy Law. Understand the nuances of each command. Understand your utter sinfulness and helplessness before God's Law. Take each command of God up a level as our Lord has taught us until you realize with Paul this...**"

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 3:19**...Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the

world may become accountable to God; <sup>20</sup> because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

On the other hand, if you are here and feeling the full weight of your sin. If you are condemned by what you have done or not done. If you have committed sexual sin, or been rebellious toward our parents and are feeling the weight of the Law's condemnation, John 8 also has a message for you. Listen to this.

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 8:10**...And straightening up, Jesus said to her, "**Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?**" <sup>11</sup> And she said, "**No one, Lord.**" And Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.**"

You see the message for us...Luther's message to us is, "**Flee to the Christ and His cross. There is mercy to forgive all your sin. There is imputed righteousness to be had. The righteousness of Christ can clothe you and the wrath of God can be averted. This forgiveness will not be denied because of the greatness of your sin. The pronouncement of Christ is clear. You can put down your burden and shame. Come unto Christ and He will give you rest.**"

Now that is why it is important of you to read the Bible with some sort of consistent hermeneutic. Still I hope you can see that that is how we ought to read the Bible and it makes the Bible come alive. I mean take an Old Testament narrative like Jonah.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Jonah 1:1**...The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "**Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.**" <sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Now let me ask you. That is an Old Testament narrative. Does that speak peace to you or condemn you? It condemns me and I'll tell you why. It condemns me because I have understood the direct command of God many times and have run with all might and being to disobey what he has said to do. When I read this story of Jonah, it is my story. My disobedience comes to my mind and I am condemned. I then want to go to him who always obeyed, who always did as he was told. I want to go to him that obeyed God's commands in my place and throw myself on his mercy.

My sin causes me to flee to Christ. Luther said that if a Christian can get that concept they will be a solid Christian all their life. As a matter of fact, he said it this way, **"Forget about how much education a man has...if they can determine the difference between law and gospel go ahead and give them their doctor's cap."**

Now I think the duty of a pastor...and this ought to help you to pray rightly for Tom Ferrell...the duty of a pastor is to know what his congregation needs to hear and to give it to them...the law or the gospel. If you are like me, you are thinking to yourself, **"Well that is impossible for any man to do."** Of course, it's impossible but the Spirit of God can lead a man to do what needs to be done and that is how you ought to pray for Tom and the other elders.

That is the reason we take communion every week. We want to make sure that no matter what the exposition contains...whether it is law or gospel...that the gospel is placarded before you eyes. You see that frees Tom up to let the law passages bear their full weight.

Anyway, that is the law and the gospel. That is, I think next to the doctrine of justification that is Luther's principal contribution to the church. So when you read the text, this is what you should do. You should ask yourself, "**Does this passage condemn me and if so in what way?**" Now if it does condemn you, you should ask yourself, "**In what way did my Lord obey this command? In what way did my Lord fulfill these expectations in my place?**"

If you ask yourself those questions I think it will cause your heart to flee to him.

A few years back, I had a friend, a faithful member of my Sunday School class come up to me after class one day. This brother understood the Law, the full weight of the Law. He was an honest guy, who looked at the words of the Law and felt its reproach. He actually meditated on the Law during the week and by Sunday he came to church gasping for the Gospel like a man who has been under water for three minutes gasps for air. At the end of one lesson I wanted to remind everyone about Christ's tenderness to us in the gospel and so I did and he came up to me afterwards and said, "**Tom, tell me again, I need to hear about His mercy again. Tell me about his imputed righteousness again.**" With tears in his eyes, with love for what Christ has done, he says, "**Tell me one more time.**"

You see the law had done its work. He was fleeing to Christ. That's what Luther says we all ought to do for each other. We are to love each other in such a way that we speak law or gospel to our friends and wives and children and brothers and sisters depending upon their need.

No friends how is that not the most relevant thing we could ever do. It may be more powerful than any other thing we could discuss. And we are to thank Luther for that. Of course, more than that we are to thank the Lord Jesus himself. You see, the Gospel is powerful enough to save even Christians. When I think about that, I think of the story of the minister who at the turn of the century visited England. On Sunday morning, he visited the chapel of a very famous preacher. He listened to the eloquent style and marvelous vocabulary of this famous minister and when the service was over, he noted the many comments of the parishioners as they left the service. He summarized their comments as a group by saying,

**"My, what a wonderful preacher we have."**

Later that night, this same visiting minister went to hear Spurgeon preach. And Spurgeon proclaimed the full fury of the Law and then the marvelous sweetness of the Gospel. As the congregation left the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he noted that the response was somewhat different. When pressed by his friends upon arriving home, he stated that Spurgeon's parishioners exclaimed to a man, woman, and child,

**"My, what a wonderful Savior we have."**

Let that be our prayer as we study, work, and pray and consider the full weight of the Law and the Gospel.

Let's pray.