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Theses on the Law and Gospel

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1. Is the Gospel primary for theology? Primary can have two meanings. The Gospel is primary in the sense that it is the chief content of preaching and the final goal. The Gospel is not primary in the sense that it is the first step in theology.

2. What is then the first step in theology? The Gospel can only be preached after a number of prior assumptions have been made. The number of prior assumptions can vary depending on how they are divided or counted.

3. Does this mean that the Gospel is really dependent on *something* or *someone* else? No! The Gospel never hits a person in a moral or ethical vacuum, but only has saving efficacy where a person has at least a sense of guilt, but it is not *dependent* for its content.

4. Is a sense of personal guilt the only prior assumption? No, there are others. Before a person can receive the Gospel, he must have an awareness in some sense or another of a God who holds him morally responsible.

5. Does this mean that there must be mere intellectual or rational awareness of God before the Gospel is preached? No, there must be more than a mere intellectual knowledge. A philosophical concept of God as the Prime Cause, *prima causa*, of all things is not sufficient. What is required is knowledge of a moral God making moral demands on man. Still there are no theology and Gospel without some type of knowledge about God and His existence.

6. Is an intellectual acceptance of the idea of a God or Divine Being the only step necessary before receiving the Gospel?

While such a knowledge is necessary, it is not the only factor necessary for hearing the Gospel. Without feeling moral or ethical guilt, the Gospel is totally without its saving or redeeming effects.

7. How do people receive this sense of moral guilt?

All people are born with a sense of morality or ethics, a sense of right or wrong. Man, unlike all other creatures, is moral.

Note to Theses 3, 4, 5, 6: It might appear in the case of infant baptism that the Gospel, without the Law, is applied directly to the child. If this were so, then there would be an instance in which Gospel, that is, the Gospel in Baptism, comes before the Law. The ancient liturgies of Baptism which are preserved as the regular forms in the Lutheran Church all indicate that the child is morally accountable both in guilt and consequences. Baptismal formulas for children follow this order. The Gospel of Jesus' blessing the children is first read to indicate that children are indeed to be included in the kingdom and thus are entitled to Baptism. Then the child is asked if he renounces Satan and his works and accepts the Apostolic Creed. After follows Baptism. Baptism is a pure proclamation of grace, but it is only administered on the presupposition that the child like all other human beings is a sinner and accountable to God. Strange as it might seem both Roman and Baptist traditions in Christendom hold the child morally accountable only when it gets to what is called the age of reason when the child does something wrong. More should be said on the matter. Let it suffice here that the Lutheran Confessions look upon sin first as an inborn state or condition and secondly as what people actually do. Thus even in the case of infant baptism, Law precedes Gospel.

8. Does this mean that man is infallible or near infallible in using this moral function to distinguish right from wrong? Man cannot always infallibly distinguish right from wrong, but he is so created by God that he must use this function of distinguishing right from wrong. Because of sin, the moral function in fact often mis-functions.

9. Does this mean that man is always a moral being? Yes, man is always a moral being, capable of and destined to make moral decisions. With this moral sense he has a sense of moral responsibility.

10. Does a man ever lose these moral senses? He can if he constantly ignores or breaks the inborn moral sense. Society recognizes that such individuals must be confined for their own sakes and for the sake of society.

11. Can man receive a moral knowledge from outside of himself? Yes, this moral sense, involving the ability to decide between right or wrong and the responsibility for one's actions, were given through special revelations by God to Noah, Abraham and the Patriarchs. Moses, however, is considered the chief giver of the moral law since he is first responsible for writing down the prior moral mandates and is the one who received the Ten Commandments. Today these moral directives with ensuing moral accountability are recorded in the Bible.

12. Are the inborn moral sense and the Ten Commandments different? The moral sense and the Ten Commandments are not different in content. In both God has adequately given the Law. However, the moral sense inborn in man takes priority over the Ten Commandments for several reasons:

- A. The moral sense is an essential and basic part of the creation which is God's first act of love to the world.
- B. This moral sense is universally available to mankind, even among those societies which did not receive the special revelations made to the Patriarchs, Moses, and the Prophets.
- C. This moral sense can be seen wherever men are governing themselves. No society can or does exist without government. Rulers and leaders are God's agents for this moral law. The moral inborn sense is universal.
- D. The Ten Commandments are a summary of and are based on this moral code. Thus the Second Table of the Ten Commandments can and may be and is applied to and in all society.

In another sense the Ten Commandments have priority over the moral sense as Law.

- A. The Ten Commandments are God's own articulations, i.e., in words, of the moral sense.
- B. Man's own articulation of the moral sense is always imperfect and faulty because of sin. The Ten Commandments and their further elaboration in Scripture are God's, and not man's, articulations of His own law.
- C. The moral sense was directed to man in a state of sinless-

ness, but the Ten Commandments are directed particularly to man in a condition of sin and thus more useful.

Is the Law in either form chiefly positive or negative? God's Law in creation was basically positive, giving directives to man what he should do. Man, by stepping outside of this relationship with God, caused the law to function negatively. This was not God's original purpose.

13. In preparation for the Gospel message must the written Mosaic Law be used or acknowledged as valid? No, the preacher of the Gospel message may convict his hearers by calling attention to the abrogation of the moral sense available within man and nature in general. This will in no way be contrary to the Mosaic Law.

14. Is the acceptance of God with His moral demands the only prior requirement to Gospel preaching? No, the hearer must have some type of conviction concerning his own or the world's existence. He cannot doubt the world's or his own real or actual or objective existence. Each man himself and the world which he knows is the source to him of the moral sense. Without an implicit awareness to such objective existence, the moral demands of God in nature have no avenues to make demands on man. Even those who deny this type of existence still however can and do live morally.

15. Is not the opinion requiring acknowledgement of objective reality rationalistic? Rationalism in its classical form means that that which is not understandable has no existence. It means that there are not two sources of knowledge, natural and supernatural, but one, natural. The Law can and does have natural and supernatural sources. This opinion is not an idea compatible with Rationalism, classical or otherwise. The idea of natural law is Pauline, Catholic, and Lutheran.

16. Is it possible for the Gospel to exist without the Law? It is possible that men can have a knowledge of the Law and have no knowledge of the Gospel; however, the Gospel can never function to save persons without the Law and without the Law's functioning to condemn persons. The Gospel as purely historical knowledge can create *fides historica*, essential to saving faith but not identical to it.

17. Is the Gospel then dependent on the Law? No. However, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed for salvation, the Law must first be known.

18. In what way(s) is the Law proclaimed in connection with the Gospel? The Gospel has meaning only to those convicted by the Law. The Gospel is essentially the news that in Christ Jesus God has fulfilled all of the righteous demands of His own Law and has suffered the punishments which were the necessary consequences of man's breaking the Law. The Law is the blueprint for the sacrifice of Christ. The Law is to Christ what a map is to the traveler. Therefore, we can say that God acted legally or lawfully. He was compelled not by the Law or His nature but moved by His own love to redeem man; but after He committed Himself to the redemption of man He acted according to His Law not without or contrary to it.

19. When it is said that the Law lays down the requirements for the Gospel, is not the Gospel becoming subservient to the Law or written code? An opinion of this type could only be entertained if

the moral Law of God were the result of an arbitrary act of God or if the Law of God were an accident of history or culture to meet man's needs at a certain time. But on the contrary, the Law of God is a reflection of His essence. The Law is a picture of true reality. It is an essential part of all creation, including the very essence of God. It is not added *post factum*, and it is never removed. The Law can never be said to be an inadequate or faulty revelation of God since all revelations of God are without imperfection.

20. Doesn't the Gospel replace the Law?

Insofar as the Law makes demands and sets the boundaries for a proper relationship with God the Law is never replaced.

Insofar as the Law threatens all breakers of the Law, the Law is replaced by the Gospel. The Gospel is not the news that the Law does not hold persons accountable, but rather it is the news that God holds Jesus Christ accountable for our transgressions.

21. Will the Law be abolished in eternity or the parousia? As long as there is creation, there will be Law. Divine creation always has the Law built into it. The second table of the Law with its regulations for society will pass away when the earthly society is superseded by the heavenly one. However in glory redeemed mankind will obey the first table of the Law perfectly at all times. Only one God will be acknowledged and His name honored and worshipped. Thus the first three commandments can be summarized as loving God.

Even the second table will be fulfilled perfectly because the redeemed will love each other perfectly.

The threats of the Law will be totally invalid in heaven because in Christ the redeemed have kept the Law perfectly. Upon the unjust the Law works its wrath forever. Today the Law even threatens the "old Adam" in Christians, that obstinate part which refuses to be converted. Works done by threats do not pertain to or assist salvation.

22. The Law can and does exist outside of special or supernatural revelation. Can the same be said about the Gospel? No! The Gospel exists only through a special act of God's love. This is called grace. It is not found in and through creation and it may not be identified with God's creative love or with His acts of forbearance or leniency in not visiting the sinner immediately with the consequences of his sin.

23. Where can the Gospel be found?

The Gospel always is at least a type of intellectual information which God has provided since the fall into sin. It is simply God's promise that He will provide the solution to man's predicament in sin. Before the New Testament times it is the news that a descendant of Eve will arise from fallen mankind to restore man at least to his original condition. Christians know Jesus as the answer to these promises.

24. Can the Gospel be verified? God's ultimate verification of His promise is Jesus who is the promised man.

25. Did God provide any verification of this Gospel before Jesus? In the age that God gave the promise of future deliverance, He provided signs to His people. God's command to believe the

promise of the Gospel before Jesus was accompanied by signs which supported their truth in the promise and their hope in the future Deliverer.

26. What were some of these signs before Jesus? Seth, Noah, the Patriarchs, Moses, the Judges, the Davidic Kings and the Prophets possessed, and were themselves tangible, historical, and available signs pointing to the final or ultimate deliverance. In some cases, saints eager for God's deliverer, made false identifications. Cain was not Eve's deliverer, even though she had hoped for this. Seth was a sign of the promise to her. Saints died knowing that salvation was still in the future.

27. Is the Gospel prior to the Scriptures? Obviously, the Gospel or the Promise existed many years before it was inscripturated. God is known as a speaking God rather than a writing God. Even then the spoken Promise never existed without the spoken Law. True, the Gospel came into existence before the Bible did. This situation, however, does not exist for us. The situation in the church since the death of the apostles is that the Gospel comes through the Scriptures and is normed in the Scriptures as to its content. Thus, today the Scriptures are prior to the Gospel.

28. Can the Gospel exist without the Scriptures today? The Gospel exists in other forms outside of the Scripture. Only the Gospel as it exists in the Scriptures however bears the guarantee of God's own divine certification. Thus the Gospel, regardless of the form, must be judged and checked by its divine norm, the Holy Scriptures. Even Bible translations, which are bearers of the Gospel, only do so insofar as they adequately convey the original thoughts. All forms of the Gospel, including translations, must be checked against the Scripture in the original languages. In summary, the Gospel does exist apart from the Scripture but it must be constantly corrected, judged, augmented by Scripture.

29. Since the Gospel today is dependent on the Scriptures, do the Scriptures save us? Only Jesus saves a person because of His atoning death. He alone is the object of faith. The Gospel which is the news that this has happened may be said to save a person because the Gospel is the message which directs to Jesus. The Holy Scriptures as a conveyer of the Gospel and God's divinely certified source of the Gospel can also in this sense be said as having saving qualities. Since not every word of God is Gospel but some words are Law, the Holy Scriptures as word also preach the Law and in doing *only* this, the Holy Scriptures do not save. Paul specifically says that the Holy Scriptures were given to make us wise unto salvation by the Gospel.

30. What is the relationship of the Gospel and our interpretation of the Bible?

A. Is any method of Biblical interpretation possible?

Not every proposed method of Biblical interpretation is possible. A great variety of methods of Biblical and Gospel *proclamation* are not only possible, but are now being legitimately used. However, the science of Biblical interpretation is, comparatively, limited severely. To put it quite simply, the method of literary interpretation can be no more

than what is suggested by the literature itself. Each pericope supplies its own principle of interpretation. Where pericopes are determined to be of the same type, then the predetermined principles of one pericope can be transferred to another. However, even in these cases, the principles of interpretation can hypothetically be demonstrated from the pericope itself and must be demonstrated upon demand.

For example, Paul's use of allegory or analogy in Galatians 4 in regard to Jerusalem does not mean that any other pericope can be considered allegory or analogy. Simply because The Good Samaritan pericope is a parable does not suggest that other pericopes, The Creation or The Nativity of Jesus, are also parables. The possible ahistorical character of a parable has nothing to say whatsoever with the historical character of those events which claim to be history.

The Scriptures like any other literature demand no more than what other literature demands. There is no limitless range of methods of Biblical interpretation for one pericope.

- B. Is the Gospel a limiting principle of Biblical interpretation? The Gospel is not a limiting principle of Biblical interpretation. In fact the Gospel is not a principle of Biblical interpretation, *but a result of a method of Biblical interpretation derived from certain but not all pericopes.*

A prior, extra-biblical Gospel principle of Biblical interpretation is by very definition not a legitimate principle of Biblical interpretation, because it is not taken from the literature or dependent on the literature which it purports to interpret. Even where the Gospel is admittedly derived from the Holy Scripture, the Gospel is never a principle of Biblical interpretation. Those sections of the Bible identified as having Gospel are handled by raw literary principles. The Gospel is not a principle of interpretation to be applied even to Gospel sections. Gospel is the product of various pericopes when those pericopes are interpreted in the light of the original intentions of the writer. Thus parables (Prodigal Son) and historical accounts (Cross and Resurrection) and the application of theology (Philippians 2) can all be Gospel, the news of the good things that God has done for us. This in no way suggests or allows for a transferral of Biblical principles from one pericope to another.

There are many sections of the Bible which were not written to convey the Gospel and which today do not have this as a purpose. It is also questionable whether they directly and immediately serve the Gospel. The Book of Proverbs is a case in point. Certainly, the creation account might provide background material for the Gospel but it is not and can never be the Gospel. Creation is love, not Gospel!

To apply the category of Gospel to a pericope which did not at the time of its writing intend to offer Gospel is to offend against the pericope itself and to do a disservice to all principles of literary criticism.

31. Is the Gospel the only valid product of Biblical interpretation? To be sure the Gospel, i.e., the news that God has fulfilled His own law in Jesus Christ, is the final word of God today, but it is not the only word of God. Scripture as word of God offers us other news besides what is commonly called Gospel. It tells us about creation, the history of Israel, Jesus Christ and the early church. It is debatable just how much of this salvation history (not including creation) is Law or Gospel or both. Still the validity of any of these pericopes as word of God in no way depends on one's ability to determine whether they are Law or Gospel. God's word, including Scripture, is God's word prior to any interpretation of that word. God's last word will be one of judgment or sentencing.

32. Is the Gospel the judge of the Scriptures or is the reverse so? This question can be reworded to help us understand the problem better: Is the Gospel the judge of the word of God or is the word of God the judge of the Gospel? Since God tells us that He and His own Law has saved us (this is the Gospel) the word of God is first and can never be judged by the Gospel. Since the word of God informs us what the Gospel is, the word of God is prior and always remains prior to the Gospel. Scriptures as authoritative word of God are therefore the norm or standard of the Gospel.

The conditions for salvation are determined by God. Before (this is a logical and not a temporal priority) God set forth the Gospel's plan of salvation, God was not totally without options. In other words, God redeemed the world not of necessity but out of love. It must be granted that God could have not intervened and could have allowed the world to remain in its condition of fallenness, and this in all justice. He was also free within the boundaries of His own essence to carry out any other plan at any other place. The salvation of the world is a demonstration of His freedom and sovereignty. However, to the plan of salvation recorded in the Bible, He has freely committed Himself. The revelation of this plan and its being carried out are the Gospel.

It would be a misuse of the Gospel and affront to God's mercy to make the Gospel a judge of the Scripture or any other word of God. The Gospel should not be used by man to tell us what God may, can or must tell us or say or do. The Gospel is to be accepted as what God has indeed said. To make the Gospel the judge of the Holy Scriptures or any word which God speaks to us is to destroy the function of the Gospel, which informs us what God has done.

33. Is our knowledge of the Gospel dependent on a correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures? Absolutely, yes! The knowledge of the Gospel can only come through a preaching of the message which is set down by the Scriptures themselves. This does not mean or demand a correct interpretation in each case or pericope. Some with a saving knowledge of the Gospel have had a faulty concept of the nature of the Scriptures, word of God, Scriptures as word of God, many facets of the Biblical content including the Gospel at certain points, and still have had the Gospel. This saving knowledge of the Gospel still comes from the Bible in spite of (*not because of*) the faulty hermeneutical procedures and through the use of valid

hermeneutical procedures (though not recognized), even where such procedures are ignored or explicitly denied.

34. Is it possible, even hypothetically, that if it could be demonstrated that the Scriptures deny the Gospel, that we still would or could hold to the Gospel? This is not possible! If we accept Scriptures as the only norm or source of all teaching in the church and/or as the word of God, and if we conclude that they in all their parts have no Gospel, then we must conclude that there is no Gospel. For what a person should do to please God or to be saved, he is dependent upon God's revealed requirements. God then informs him of the Gospel. In this scheme the Gospel is dependent upon God. God is not dependent on the Gospel!

35. Can the church guarantee the Gospel? No, only God is the guarantor of the Gospel. The church is God's creation through the Gospel not the creator or guarantor of the Gospel. It is not the function of the church at any time to sit in judgment upon what God may or may not say or what He has indeed said. Neither does the church supply the interpretation to what God has said. God does not speak unclear words. The church's function is to believe these words and to preach these words to those who still do not believe. The church has no function, authority, or power to tell us what the Gospel is. It also has no power to create or perpetuate the Gospel where God has not provided it.

36. Do we because we are Lutherans recognize the Gospel as the final and foremost word of God? Lutherans are frequently distinguished from other denominations because our stated purpose is to preach the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. The founding fathers of the Lutheran Church and its early major teachers agree in this. The Lutheran Confessions give testimony to this. Still we as Lutherans do not adhere to this devotion to the Gospel because we are Lutherans, but rather because we have committed ourselves to the Holy Scriptures as the word of God. In fact it is downright "un-Lutheran" to state that we hold to any tenet of Lutheran theology, including the Gospel, *simply because it is Lutheran*. The Lutheran Church and its Confessions are no more guarantors of the word of God and the Gospel than the Roman Church is the guarantor of the divine truth. The church receives the word of God with a grateful heart, believes the Gospel and through its life and testimony calls others to repentance.

37. If the Holy Scriptures are restricted in regard to permissible interpretation by the intent of the writers, and if the Holy Scriptures collectively and in the individual books provide the Gospel in all clarity, how is it that not all who use the Holy Scriptures find the Gospel?

There is no prior guarantee that everyone who hears the word of God will properly receive it. The parable of the Sower and the Seed teaches us to expect unbelief as man's natural response to God's word. Some reject God, others reject His word, and others simply do not understand or falsify His word. There are some who recognize the Scriptures as the word of God and do not have the Gospel. Others do not explicitly recognize the Scriptures as the word of God and

still have the Gospel. Still others recognize neither the Scriptures as word of God nor the Gospel.

The reason for rejection of any word of God, including the Gospel, is sheer unbelief. Even where a clear understanding of the Gospel does exist, this does not assure that the Gospel will be accepted for its saving purposes. Satan is the factor in any interpretation, faulty, imperfect, incomplete, or unclear. He twists clear words of God to His own purpose [Gen. 3:1ff.]. He is ultimately and personally responsible for the concept that the Holy Scripture may not necessarily teach the Gospel and still urges us to believe the Gospel. Soon after, this "suspended-in-a-vapor Gospel" also disappears. Until Jesus appears as the universal judge, interpretations conflicting with the original intent will multiply. Those who do this do it without impunity but must suffer the just consequences, "But woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

38. Is the Gospel a unifying principle in interpreting the Bible? The Gospel is the one goal for which God gave us the Holy Scriptures. When the Christian comes to the conviction that God has proclaimed to him the Gospel in one section of the Scripture, he expects to hear or read the same good news in other sections of the Scriptures even before hearing or reading them. In some cases he will hear the accusing Law or Gospel, or Law applied to Christian living. Sometimes he will find all of these in one section.

There will be some sections hard to understand not because God speaks unclearly but because of the intervening years and the changes in cultures. These sections will be judged in light of the clearer ones. The difficult sections do not detract from those sections where the meaning is more apparent. In this way we may speak of the Gospel as a unifying principle.

Since each passage of each book, each book of both Testaments, serve to declare Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer, the Gospel as goal of the Bible unifies the Bible.

God as the author of the Bible is the unifying principle so far as the source is concerned. Christ and salvation is the unifying principle so far as the goal is concerned.

39. Does the Gospel as message save us?

The Gospel *as message* does *not* save us. The Gospel *as the news that God has redeemed* us from sin does save us. Words as words, even religious words are without ultimate saving value even though these words might have an emotional or psychological benefit when they are spoken.

40. What act is then really the redemptive act? Gospel preaching is not a redemptive act. The only redemptive act is the sacrificial death of Jesus through which He satisfied all God's requirements. Resurrection is not a redemptive act in this sense, rather it is God's own certification of approval on the death of Jesus and what it accomplished.

41. What is the relation between *the* redemptive act of God, Jesus' atoning death by crucifixion, and the Gospel? The Gospel comes out from the cross and receives its significance and meaning from the cross. Without the cross there is no Gospel and indeed *could be*

no Gospel! Jesus' atoning death could have existed without the Gospel, that is, without being included in a message for the benefit of man. In other words, the Gospel is dependent on the cross; the cross is not dependent on the Gospel—proclamation of the cross. God did however *freely* and lovingly choose to declare His own atonement in the cross! God was not compelled by His nature or the revelation of His nature in the Law to declare in the Gospel His act of atonement in Jesus.

42. What is the relationship of the atoning death of Jesus to the word of God? This question must be answered in two parts:

- A. The word of God, as Law which was God's prior purpose, outlines the requirements by which a man can be justified before God. It also carries with it its own penalties. Thus the word of God sets the requirements for the life and the death of Jesus, if He is going to redeem mankind.
- B. Following (at least logically so) the completion of Jesus' redemptive activities, God reports what He has done for the world out of love. The word of God as God's own guarantee stands between the event of the cross and its proclamation.

To summarize, the word of God sets down the requirements for a death of atonement and then proclaims that God has indeed fulfilled these requirements. In all of theology, Law, Gospel or whatever, *the Word of God—and not Gospel—is the controlling principle.*

43. Can we still say that the Gospel is the controlling principle in theology and its goal?

The controlling principle in theology is always God (and His Word) and the goal is always Jesus as the Law-fulfiller. Gospel, as message, is functional in this task and only the Gospel can direct faith to Jesus.

It is a worship of words (logolatry) to hang on to the proclamation as proclamation (kerygmalotry). This is important to state since the most prominent and influential school of theological thought holds to this very thing of believing the message for the message's sake. We hold to the message not for its own sake but because of what the message reports and contains, the death of Jesus for sins.

44. Is it the church's obligation to apply the Gospel to society, the structures of society, or the world in general? As this question is worded, the answer must be an emphatic no. The church does not apply just Gospel. It preaches the Law to all but preaches the Gospel only to the penitent, that is, those who have felt the sting of Law in their hearts. The Gospel also has no effect on organizations as organizations. It can have its effects on individuals who believe in Jesus and who participate in society. But the Gospel is not intended for society, governments, or civic groups in general. If we assign to the Gospel the task of affecting society, then we have turned the Gospel into Law. The common bond between church and society is recognition of a moral law and not a revealed law and Gospel.

45. Do Christians live by the Gospel instead of living by the Law? Christians have been saved by believing the Gospel and no longer do they live by the fear and threats of the Law. Jesus through His perfect performance of the Law's demands and His all atoning

death under the Law's penalties has freed man from earning his own salvation according to the Law. Christians do live their lives under the Gospel freed from the Law's threat of punishment.

46. Does this mean that the Christian is totally free from the Law? Salvation is given freely apart from the Law. This is the message of St. Paul which was revived in the Reformation by Luther. In this new state under the Gospel, the believer, freed by Jesus from the demand of the Law to earn His salvation, sees the Law in a new light and lives according to the Law also.

47. Doesn't the Law always demand and threaten and thus is it not opposed to the Gospel? To the *sinner* the Law demands and threatens, but to the child of God the Law becomes what God had originally intended it to be, the perfect expression of how God wants His children to live. This is called the Third Use of the Law in the Lutheran Confessions. Luther saw this and put it so beautifully in his explanation of the Ten Commandments in the Small Catechism. God does not place prohibitions before the believer, but gives him positive commands. Jesus explained this as love and told the parable of the Good Samaritan as an illustration of how Christians are to love. Still we are saved not because we love or do the Law in a positive way, but because Jesus died for us, as the Gospel declares.