

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL

A Scriptural Examination of Hymn 265

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God's holy Law and Gospel -
Free gifts from God on high,-
Reveal His will and pleasure,
Lest in our sins we die.
But Law and Gospel differ
In essence and in aim;
The Gospel tells God's mercy,
The Law our sin and shame.

But none can know this difference,
Unless God grants them light,
Until His Holy Spirit
Illumine their nature's night.
Yet both by man are needed
Throughout his earthly course,
And lead, if duly heeded,
To life's true Fount and Source.

The Law's demands and precepts
Are written in man's heart;
For God at the Creation
The knowledge did impart.
The teaching of the Gospel
Man never could have known,
Had God not in His mercy
Revealed it by His Son.

The Law prescribes our duty:
To do what God commands:
"Love God and love thy neighbour",
These are its strict demands.
The Gospel tell of Jesus,
Of His unfathomed love,
Who came to save, and lead us
To our blest home above.

The Law's conditional blessing
God can to none impart
Unless they keep His precepts
With all their mind and heart.
The Gospel's blessed promise
God freely doth bestow
To all who cry to Jesus
To save from sin and woe.

The Law proclaims God's anger
And curse, because of sin;
Convicting mind and conscience,
It leaves no peace within.
The Gospel offers pardon,
And calms the guilty soul;
Through Jesus' blood and merit
It makes the sinner whole.

The Law's terrific threatenings
For stubborn hearts are meant,
Who, trifling with God's goodness,
Of sin will not repent.
The Gospel's balm of healing
To sinners doth apply
Who, all their burdens feeling,
For grace and pardon cry.

The Law's work is accomplished
When sinners feel their need,
When at the feet of Jesus,
Their hearts for mercy plead.
The Gospel's work commences
When sinners sue for peace,
It then confers salvation,
From sorrow sweet release.

This difference, blessed Saviour,
Lead me to understand,
That by Thy Law and Gospel
I reach the promised land.
The Law, O may it show me
Thy wrath, my sin, and woe,
And may Thy blessed Gospel
Thy grace and peace bestow.

Grant also by Thy Gospel
The power to do Thy will,
And in my life and station,
My duty to fulfill.
All sin and evil hating,
May I serve Thee alone,
And, when life's course is ended,
Rejoice before Thy throne. Amen.

The real reason why you are learning Hymn 265 is in order to understand what the Law is there for and what the Gospel is there for. Dr. Luther correctly said:

"Unless a person knows and realizes the difference between Law and Gospel, he does not yet know the way to salvation".

As you shall see in that hymn only the Holy Spirit can show us the difference. By that we mean that as far as hymn 265 is concerned we can memorize it and we can know it perfectly in our head, but that does not yet say that we know it in our heart. Only the Holy Spirit can bring that understanding into our heart.

"Until Thy Holy Spirit
 Illume our nature's night".

Think of Luther. Even though he was very interested when the Bible first came into his hands in reading it, there was only one thing he recognized in it and that was the Law. The Gospel he completely overlooked. The Law pointed out to him sins that he had never recognized as sins before and thus made him feel that he was a much greater sinner than he ever thought. It nearly drove him to despair, because he began to wonder now: "However can I be saved?" That is why eventually he went into the cloister because the church of his day taught: The surest way to get to heaven is to go into the cloister and do what they tell you there. It taught that if you observe the rules and regulations of the cloister and if you work hard, then you would gain forgiveness of your sins. That was the reason why he went to the cloister. It was only years later through studying the Scriptures that the Lord showed him the difference. It was only then that Luther was converted. Up to that time he had been a very good church-man. He never missed Services. He went to Mass regularly and meticulously observed the rules of the cloister believing that those things would bring him forgiveness of sins. It was later when he had to prepare his lectures at the University and he really had to come down to the Scriptures that the Lord showed him the Gospel. Once he understood that, he himself says: "Then I was born again". He had found the way to salvation. The he adds: "The whole Bible now took on quite a different outlook for me". Now he began to distinguish between Law and Gospel.

He then realized why the Law really was in the Bible, namely to show him his sin, and the Gospel was there to show him the Saviour from sin and offer him free, without any works of his own, a full and free pardon.

This is vital and this is why you are going through that hymn in order that you will learn to distinguish between Law and Gospel, how they work and for whom each is meant.

HYMN 265 - DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL

The following is taken from a special tape on Hymn 265.

This hymn gives you so beautifully and fully the difference between the Law and the Gospel, the two great doctrines of the Bible. Why this is so important is if a person does not know the difference between Law and Gospel, he cannot really make "head or tail" out of the Word of God, because the Law and Gospel seem to contradict one another. When a certain man came to Jesus and asked Him: "What must I do to receive Eternal Life?" the Lord pointed him to the commandments, the Law, and told him: "These things do and you shall enter eternal life". That seems as though the Lord Himself said: "You keep the commandments, keep the Law and you perform good works and without any doubt you shall enter heaven". Then to Nicodemus the Lord said just the very opposite. He told Nicodemus: "God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life". Again the Scriptures tell us through St. John: "The Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin". When the prison keeper at Philippi, after he had received that terrific shock there in the prison when he believed that all the prisoners had escaped, asked St. Paul: "What must I do to be saved?" St. Paul did not say: "You must keep the commandments; you must do as many good works as you can and then you'll have a hope". But St. Paul simply said to him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

When you compare these things you will see that they appear quite contradictory.

When that man who came to the Lord and asked: "What must I do to inherit eternal life", why did the Lord refer him to the Law, whereas St. Paul referred the prison-keeper of Philippi to the Gospel? The reason simply was this: the man that came to Jesus and asked: "What must he do to inherit Eternal Life" really believed that the Law would save him, that he had fulfilled all the commandments. He even said: "I have kept them all from my youth. What lack I yet?" The Lord wanted this man to realize what he did lack, that he actually had not kept the Law at all, that he actually had not

kept the Law at all. The Lord put it to him that he should love his neighbour and give his money to the poor to help them. When he heard this he went away sorrowfully. Although he thought he had kept the Law, he had not done so. The Lord wanted him to asked again: "Since I haven't kept the Law, what then must I do? What is my hope?" But he walked away. He did not ask that question and in Scripture no reference is ever made to it, that he came back again.

The Lord prepared the way to salvation. When man fell into sin and was lost, separated himself from God, God prepared a way. Jesus speaks of that way: "I am the Way the Truth and Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me". We are saved only through Jesus.

In what way did Jesus become our way to Eternal Life? Jesus Christ, the Son of God came to this earth, became a true man, took on a true human nature, sin excepted of course and took our place in regard to the Law of God. He kept it perfectly, and He paid for all our transgressions against it, not with gold or silver but with His Holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. He did that for us, not for Himself, but for us. Now in the Scriptures we are told that whosoever believes and accepts this - that Christ kept the Law for him and paid for his sins - he is saved. There is no salvation through the Law, but only through the Gospel.

The word "Gospel" is really an old English word made up of two words: god (they say "good") and the old English word "spell" (we say "news"). The "Gospel" is often referred to as the "Good News", the "Good News" of our salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is so important that we are able to tell the difference. For the Bible is full of Law and Gospel. These are the two great doctrines of the Holy Scriptures.

These differences are brought out beautifully by Hymn 265.

Verse 1: God's Holy Law and Gospel -
Free gifts from God on high, -
Reveal His will and pleasure,
Lest in our sins we die.

("Lest" means "that not").

Note: "Free gifts from God on high". God does not ask us to pay for them. It is out of His grace, His undeserved love towards every member of the human race, also you, that He has given us these two great doctrines - the Law and Gospel (Good News).

Verse 1: But Law and Gospel differ
(cont) In essence and in aim;
The Gospel tells God's mercy,
The Law our sin and shame.

("Essence": what they teach).

Every sermon and every Christian indoctrination instruction must have Law and Gospel. The Law tells us about our sin and shame and why we cannot enter life eternal by ourselves because we have not kept it. The Gospel, on the other hand tells us of God's mercy, of His undeserved love towards us poor and lost sinners and how He sent His Son in order to take our place and to suffer and die for us, so that where we have done wrong, all of our sins are paid for in that way, and at the same time also to keep the commandments perfectly in our stead.

Verse 2: But none can know this difference,
Unless God grants them light,
Until His Holy Spirit
Illume their nature's night.
Yet both by man are needed
Throughout his earthly course,
And lead, if duly heeded,
To life's true Fount and Source.

(Source: God Himself).

"No man can know this difference". St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "The natural man (meaning the natural unconverted man) received not the things of the Spirit of God neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned". The preaching of the Gospel is actually foolishness to man. St. Paul mentions that several times. Man cannot understand how God, Whom he offended all his life, against Whom he sinned every day, nevertheless, loved him

so much that He sent the dearest and best that He had, His only begotten Son to pay for his sin and bring him back to heaven. Man cannot understand that. St. Paul mentions that the ancient Greeks (they were perhaps the wisest and most intelligent race that ever lived on earth) considered such a teaching foolishness: that One who was offended every day should still love the sinner, that He would send His Son for him in order that he might be saved. It really is marvelous. Human-beings cannot understand it.

When we offend somebody, particularly some dear friend, not willingly but accidentally, what does man (or we) in general do? He tries to make up to that person again, by being kind, doing for him whatsoever he can to gain his good will. Man thinks that the same thing should be done to God. By having offended Him ever so often throughout his life man thinks he must change his mind and begin to do good things again to please Him, so that He will forget our sins. But that is not God's way.

So it says here in this verse:

"But none can know this difference,
Unless God grants them light".

God Himself must show man the difference between the Law and the Gospel. He must show him through the Word, by means of which the Holy Spirit operates in man's heart that this has to be the way. No man can tell the difference unless God shows him that difference. People may say: "I this is so difficult and such a difficult way that you can't even properly understand it, why then use the Law and the Gospel? Isn't there any other way?" No, there isn't!

"Yet both by man are needed
Throughout his earthly course,
And lead, if duly heeded,
To life's true Fount and Source."

With these two doctrines of the Bible, the way to our eternal salvation is tied up.

From verse 3 onwards we have six differences between the Law and Gospel. They are put for us in a most interesting way and these differences we must remember.

Verse 3: The Law's demands and precepts
 Are written in man's heart;
 For God at the Creation
 The knowledge did impart.
 The teaching of the Gospel
 Man never could have known,
 Had God not in His mercy
 Revealed it by His Son.

In the first line of that verse you will at once realize what the Law contains, namely, "God's demands and precepts".

When God created man, the Scriptures tell us, He created him in His Own Image. That does not mean that he has the form that he now has and that God looks like man. Actually, we do not know what God looks like. The Scriptures tell us: "God is a Spirit". A spirit has no flesh and bones, has no body. So, it is only when we meet Him in everlasting life that we will have any idea at all how He looks like and what He looks like. At the Creation He gave man, as St. Paul also points out several times, a perfect knowledge of God and of His will. Both Adam and Eve didn't have to learn any commandments. God had given them this knowledge. As St. Paul says: "The Law was written in their hearts". They knew exactly what God wanted of them, what were His ways and His will and what He demanded of them. They did not first have to have a book where all this was written down and learnt it. Adam did not need a Catechism. He needed no instruction. He already knew exactly what the will of God was because God had put this knowledge into his heart. That was written in man's heart. What happened? When man sinned this knowledge that God had written in his heart began to disappear.

Picture to yourself a teacher standing in front of a blackboard, a blackboard on which some lesson that he has prepared for the children has been written. When they are finished with that lesson, he takes the eraser and he begins to

remove the writing, till eventually very little or nothing at all is left. You cannot read anymore what was on that blackboard. That is exactly what happened when man fell into sin.

Sin began to wipe out God's writing in man's heart. So in the end, there were only certain things of the Divine Moral Law which man remembered and which God once wrote in his heart. His knowledge of the Law of God practically disappeared.

You can see and observe that. So for example, natural man, as man comes into this world in an unconverted natural state, knows only a few things yet as they were once written in Adam's heart. Every human being (women too) knows by nature, you do not have to teach them that, that it is wrong to kill. The murderer after he has killed somebody will not boldly walk about and present himself to everybody. But he will disappear. He will begin to hide because he knows he has done a wrong thing. It is the same with the thief. He will hide what he stole. He will tell nobody that he has stolen this for fear of punishment.

Even among the Australian natives when one of them has committed an act of immorality, adultery, he does not talk about that. As a matter of fact, I believe, that even amongst them they try to get away and hide. They regard it as a very serious thing to commit the sin of adultery. There are certain things man still remembers. No-one has taught him that; that was still left over from the original writing in his heart. But most of the things of the Law of God man no longer knows. In order that man should know His Law God had it put down in writing and this writing we have in the Bible.

The Law of God appears in the Bible in the form of the Ten Commandments. Actually there are many, many more commandments in the Bible than ten. If you read in the Old Testament, particularly Genesis, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers, books written by Moses, you will find there many rules and regulations which God gave to Moses who wrote them down. Even in the New Testament we find different things that they even did not observe in the Old Testament. So, we now have the Law in writing. In order to inform ourselves of what God's Law really is, what its commandments are, we must look it up in our Bible. There we will find them all. That is the Law of God. This Law has to be kept to the very last point if man is to gain salvation by the Law.

Here is a point that many people do not realize. The Law is also spiritual. Not only must the Law be kept outwardly by certain acts that we perform, but it is spiritual, also every one of our thoughts must conform to the Law of God. If people only think a wrong thing, they are sinning just as much as they do it they perform the act they have been thinking about. Many people do not realize that and get quite a shock when they are told: "Yes, you may live a good life, but what about your thoughts (your thought life)? What are you thinking about so often during the day - right things or wrong things?" Therefore it is so important that we realize that even one wrong thought will condemn us forever. When you consider this, you will realize why nobody can be saved by the Law. For only one wrong thought in his heart, only one wrong thought throughout his lifetime has already sealed his doom.

So the Law imparts the knowledge of the will of God. The natural Moral Law, the remainder of what is still left in people's hearts, dating back to Creation is no longer sufficient and falls far short of giving people an idea of what God wants of them. "They must be perfect", He says, "For I the Lord your God am perfect, therefore be ye also perfect". When we realize that even wrong thinking condemns us, even one wrong thought throughout our life cuts the line, then we shall know and realize that we cannot possibly be saved through the Law.

Verse 3: The teaching of the Gospel
(cont) Man never could have known,
 Had God not in His mercy
 Revealed it by His Son.

Sounds strange doesn't it. But it is true. No man, not even the brightest, the most intelligent and most highly educated, even came to this thought: that since man cannot save himself God saved him, by sending His Son into this world to suffer and die for him. That is what the Greeks regarded as foolishness - such a silly thing to do.

Many years ago a young migrant woman came in touch with a certain pastor. Her mother was very concerned about her rather loose life and spoke to the minister and said to him: "Do speak to her! Do make things plain to her!" The minister met her then. She was quite brazen. She had never bothered about the Law of God, never bothered about God's Word. When she was told that this way of life that she led would completely condemn her and she would be lost forever, she said: "Oh, yes, that could be so". Then the minister also told her, that even though she was such a great sinner, which she did not deny, God still loved her, wanted her saved and for her sake also sent into this world His Only

begotten Son, the Dearest and Best that He had and laid on Him her sins and that He carried them to the cross on Calvary and that through that Act she was saved. She looked at the minister in astonishment and she said (note the words): "Is God really as silly as that, that He would do such a thing?" Also to her the message of the Gospel was foolishness. Nevertheless Christ also died for her. Whether she in her later life accepted it, I do not know. But that is so.

We never could have known the Gospel message by nature. It did not even come into the minds and hearts of the wisest of the ancient Greeks that God would in His mercy, in His undeserved love, grace, sent His Son to redeem the human race. So that is the first difference between the Law and the Gospel. Of the Law man by nature knows at least something. Of the Gospel he knows nothing and if it is never brought to him, he is hopelessly lost.

Verse 4: The Law prescribes our duty:
To do what God commands:
"Love God and love thy neighbour",
These are its strict demands.

That is the Law: what God demands of us, what He tells us to do or not to do. Now look at the difference.

The Gospel tell of Jesus,
Of His unfathomed love,
Who came to save, and lead us
To our blest home above.

The Gospel is just the reverse. It does not speak to us one word of sin; it makes no demand on us; does not threaten us; does not pronounce punishment; does not say: "If you do not do that etc. you are lost"; but the Gospel tells us what God has done for us. Here is another difference between Law and Gospel: the Law tells us what God wants us to do, what He demands of us and what we should not do; the Gospel on the other hand tells us what God has done for us and for our salvation, how He sent His Son Who came to save and lead us to our blest home above.

Verse 5: The Law's conditional blessing
God can to none impart
Unless they keep His precepts
With all their mind and heart.
The Gospel's blessed promise
God freely doth bestow
To all who cry to Jesus
To save from sin and woe.

"The Law's conditional blessing", note the word conditional. The Law does say: "I can save you and I will save you, provided (and here is the condition) you keep every Commandment with all your mind and heart"; that means, not merely outwardly but also inwardly.

"Unless you do that, unless you lead an absolutely perfect life, have not even throughout your life one wrong thought", says the Law, "unless you do that I can't save you".

Look at the Gospel:

The Gospel's blessed promise
God freely doth bestow
To all who cry to Jesus
To save from sin and woe.

The Gospel is free. God does not require that we pay for it even one cent. It is free and the blessed promise is given to whoever accepts the work of God's Son, which He did here or all mankind, for every individual while He was on earth. Whoever accept that, places his trust in that, he shall be saved. Not only shall he be saved but actually as soon as he believes it is saved already. Here is another tremendous difference between the Law and Gospel.

The Blessing of the Law is conditional - if you keep My Commandments perfectly. The Gospel's blessed promise has no conditions. God simply says: here it is, make the fullest possible use of it. Put all your trust in it and you are saved.

Verse 6:
 The Law proclaims God's anger
 And curse, because of sin;
 Convicting mind and conscience,
 It leaves no peace within.

The Law consists of threats, demands and threats of punishment: "If you do not keep these Commandments and keep them perfectly, both outwardly and inwardly, you have no hope of salvation. You are condemned forever". The man or woman who has been convicted of sin, convicted of it and then is told the punishment which comes to every sinner unless that sin is forgiven, unless he finds forgiveness and that sin is washed away, that leaves no peace within. So the people who are under the Law, who do not know the Gospel, who believe that they must by their good works save themselves are never really happy; because their own conscience tells them: "You have not done it. No matter how hard you have tried, you have failed again and again. Instead of removing sin, you have added to it". People of that type who know nothing better, who do not know the Gospel, they become more and more anxious as the day of death approaches and some of them die in terror. You probably have heard of Voltaire, the great French scholar. It is said of him when he was on his death-bed - it comes from the nurse who attended to him - that he, who regarded God as a joke in his better days, became terrified and that he cried out in anguish: "God, Oh, God, what will I do?" But unfortunately the man did not know the Gospel and he passed away and met God in the state of an unbeliever. Yes, it leaves no peace within.

The Gospel does just the very opposite.

The Gospel offers pardon,
 And calms the guilty soul;
 Through Jesus' blood and merit
 It makes the sinner whole.

This is really the most wonderful thing that has ever been proclaimed in this world. You, sinner though you be, sinner who has broken the Law of God every day of your life, nevertheless, through Jesus blood and merit you are made whole. If you accept the Work that Christ did for you in your stead, you have nothing to fear; you are completely forgiven; you are pardoned. When you step out of this world into the next, you need have no fear, no worry, because just like the thief on the cross, of whom you no doubt have heard, who also approached Jesus: "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom", was told: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". The Law makes the sinner unhappy, the Gospel gives him confidence and hope, and announces to him the message of salvation.

Verse 7 deals with the people to whom the Law and the Gospel are to be proclaimed. The Gospel is not for everybody, nor is the Law for everybody.

The Law's terrific threatenings
 For stubborn hearts are meant,
 Who, trifling with God's goodness,
 Of sin will not repent.
 The Gospel's balm of healing
 To sinners doth apply
 Who, all their burdens feeling,
 For grace and pardon cry.

A stubborn sinner, a sinner who trifles with God's goodness, who perhaps puts up this argument: "Well, if all my sins are forgiven already, then I can live on in them, I can do as I please"; for who rejects the Word of God altogether, a stubborn sinner, for him there is no Gospel. For him there is only the Law, the Law which is to soften his heart, terrify him until at last he realizes that after all his way of life won't pay. He cannot overdraw the account on God's books, but that there is something needed before that can happen and that is true repentance. That is so important. There are people, who in the Lord's time were the Pharisees, whom He called hypocrites. In other words, He told them the truth about themselves. They were not then at all ready to hear the Gospel. For only after the Law has terrified us, has shown to us our sin and our shame and we realize what we really are and where we are going to, namely, not on the way to eternal salvation, but on the way to eternal damnation, until we know this, have experienced it and have been terrified and frightened, only then must the sinner hear the Gospel, the message of salvation.

You may know something about farming and gardening. Let us say that you want to have a bed of beautiful flowers. First you have to get the seed. If you do not prepare the soil but just put the seed on top of the land and hope for the best,

you know that you will never have anything there. The ground has to be prepared first. You have to dig it up, rake it, reduce it to a very fine tilth and then you will sow your seed and look after it. The human heart is like an acre of soil. The Scriptures tell us that the human heart by nature, in the unconverted state, is as hard as a rock. That rock has to be smashed and broken up and reduced to a fine tilth. The hammer which God uses there is the Law. So the Law must always be preached and proclaimed and brought to the sinner before the Gospel. Because just as particularly fine seed has no hope in an uncultivated garden plot, just so the Gospel has no chance in an impenitent unrepentant stubborn rock-like human heart. Therefore not only must the Law with its threat be proclaimed, but it always has to be proclaimed first, to prepare the soil for the reception of the seed of the Gospel.

Once a sinner has been awakened, once he has seen his sin and also realizes the consequences his sin will bring him, then you stop with the Law. The Law has done its work.

The Gospel's balm of healing
To sinners doth apply
Who, all their burdens feeling,
For grace and pardon cry.

Those who have been alarmed by the Law and now realize that they must have pardon and forgiveness, they are ready for the Gospel. The next verse will now tell us that.

The Law's work is accomplished
When sinners feel their need,
When at the feet of Jesus,
Their hearts for mercy plead.

When the Law has brought them to that state, then its work is completed; then the Gospel's work commences.

The Gospel's work commences
When sinners sue for peace,
It then confers salvation,
From sorrow sweet release.

When the human heart has been prepared for the reception of the Gospel then you don't preach to that person the Law any longer. You proclaim to him the Gospel and that will not only show him the way to salvation very clearly, the only way, but it will also completely change him. He will be happy. He will know that now he has a full and free pardon and he will also realize something else which comes in verse 10.

But first of all verse 9:

This difference, blessed Saviour,
Lead me to understand,
That by Thy Law and Gospel
I reach the promised land.
The Law, O may it show me
Thy wrath, my sin, and woe,
And may Thy blessed Gospel
Thy grace and peace bestow.

Verse 8 gives us the sixth difference and now is the prayer that the Lord may show us the difference and that we by means of the Law and the Gospel may reach the promised land.

The Law, O may it show me
Thy wrath, my sin, and woe,
And may Thy blessed Gospel
Thy grace and peace bestow.

Here is your way to Eternal Life. May the Lord of all mercy through the preaching of the Law show you that you too are a sinner, lost hopelessly, and that you cannot through the Law, through being good and doing good, enter Eternal

Life, but that there is only one way - the Gospel, which speaks of Jesus, of His unfathomable love, who came to save and lead us to our blest home above:

Verse 10: Grant also by Thy Gospel
The power to do Thy will,
And in my life and station,
My duty to fulfill.
All sin and evil hating,
May I serve Thee alone,
And, when life's course is ended,
Rejoice before Thy throne.

You have heard of a Christian life. Christians are people who have brought their sins to Jesus, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world and who have realized what Jesus the Son of God has done for them. Because He Himself took their place and bore the fearful wrath of God in order to redeem them, they will not realize that they certainly should be thankful to Him, that He has saved them from that awful fate they were facing - eternal damnation, remaining eternally in hell. When they realize this that He has saved them at a very high cost to Himself, what do you think they'll do and how will they feel? They will certainly feel thankful. When we are thankful to somebody who has done something wonderful for us, has saved us even from temporal death, what will we do? We will be thankful in the first place and we will undoubtedly also express our thanks to Him with our words. We will tell Him how good He has been to us. We have not even deserved it. So we will praise Him and thank Him. But the true Christian will go further. He will say: "Lord, You did all that for me. So now because You did it and since I realize what you saved me from and how hard it was for You, Lord, I would like to do something for You and show You not only with words but also with actions that I am thankful. So, Lord, tell me what can I do to show You my thankfulness?" The Lord says: "Right, I am pleased that you are thankful. Now you want to show Me that you are thankful and you want to do something for Me. Alright, you have a look at the Law. The Law is My will. That is how I want particularly My children to live. That is the rule and standard. Well, if you want to show Me your thankfulness also outwardly, you study the Law and try your best to live that way as Children of God should live. Then I will be happy too".

The letter of St. James deals with this very thing, that a Christian is also to live as a Christian does. He even says, and quite correctly, that if a person who calls himself a Christian will not lead the life of a Christian then the faith he boasts of is no faith at all. That is just an imagination. If we have the true faith, really believe what the Gospel tells us about Jesus our Saviour, how He had to suffer, die and how they ill-treated Him etc., and we think of that and remember that was all done for our salvation, then we will say: "Well Lord, we can't thank You enough with words. We also want to do something for You. So Lord, grant that I may now live also as a Christian to thank Thee with the kind of life that I lead". So we will read that verse again.

Grant also by Thy Gospel
The power to do Thy will,
And in my life and station,
My duty to fulfill.

The Law cannot give us that power, only the Gospel can. If we truly accept the Gospel and believe it, then we are on the right track.

My Duty: All sin and evil hating,
May I serve Thee alone,
And, when life's course is ended,
Rejoice before Thy throne.

Remember not even through a Christian Life are we saved. That doesn't count for salvation. I lead a Christian Life because I have been saved, because He has borne all my sin, because He has paid the tremendous cost; not with gold or silver, but with His Holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

I would suggest that you memorize this hymn and ever keep this hymn with its excellent differences between the Law and the Gospel in mind. May the Law also show you and convince you that as you are by nature you cannot possibly, no matter what you do, no matter even if you pay money, you cannot enter life everlasting in that state. Then may you seek refuge in the Gospel, may you also firmly believe that this Jesus, the only begotten Son of God also came for you and that He also suffered and died for your sins and when on the cross He shouted victoriously: "It is finished",

that then also all your sins were paid for and that you are redeemed. Accept that because this is not what I think and it is not my words but what I'm telling you here is securely based on the Word of the Lord Himself.

May the Lord bless you and give you a true knowledge of the way to life and that you and I and all the other Children of God may someday meet in bliss and glory before the throne of the Lamb and there praise Him for evermore.