

A Study of the Book:  
**Handling the Word of Truth – Part 1**

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<sup>NAU</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

### Some Reasons for This Study

- A right understanding of the Bible – *regarding Law and Gospel* – is essential to reap its temporal and eternal benefits; however, many are confused about the proper distinction between L & G.
- Basic definitions – SOS:
  - L = Shows our Sin
  - G = Shows our Savior
- “L does not merely scold; it kills.” (8)
- “G is...a word from God that forgives sin for Jesus’ sake.” (8)
- When sin is taken too lightly, *not understanding that it kills*, many conclude that their goodness is acceptable to God.
- When the Gospel is not seen as *God’s work alone*, the good news becomes a reason for concern: Have I done my part? Even worse, *such people are trusting in themselves rather than Christ!*
- Prayer: Let’s ask God’s blessing upon this class and our Worship-Studies, which are scheduled for Wednesdays in January (4, 11, 18, 25) at 7:00 p.m.

### The Contents of the Book: Handling the Word of Truth:

- “The book takes Walther’s twenty-five theses on the proper distinction of L and G, organizes them under thirteen headings, and unpacks them using insights from Walther’s own exposition of the theses, as well as materials from Luther and some contemporary Lutheran thinkers.” (9)

### Chapter 1: Two Different Doctrines: *Some basics!*

- Notice how *Law condemns*, but *Gospel justifies*: <sup>NAU</sup> Romans 3:20 ...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup> But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...
- How are L & G made known?
  - The L has been written on our hearts.
  - The G is revealed in the Bible.
- What does L & G promise?
  - L promises death – (Romans 6:23a) *because we cannot keep it perfectly*
  - G promises life – *as a gift*; “salvation is not achieved but received by grace through faith alone.” (14)
- <sup>NAU</sup> Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- How does the L effect a person?
  - It demands *but does not enable compliance*.

- It diagnoses the disease *but provides no cure.*
- It terrifies the conscience *but offers no comfort.*
- How does the G effect a person?
  - It does not require anything good that man must furnish: not a good heart, not a good disposition, no improvement of his condition, no godliness, no love either of God or men.
  - It demands nothing, *but it gives all that is needed.*
- Who is addressed with each doctrine?
  - L – to **secure** sinners:
    - They excuse or rationalize their sinful behavior – *I’m not that bad!*
    - They trust in their own righteousness – *I’m pretty good!*
  - G – to **alarmed** sinners:
    - By grace they know of their own helplessness.
    - By grace they are looking to God for rescue.

**Chapter 2: The High and Hard Art:** *It’s difficult to properly distinguish between L & G!*

- A comment from Martin Luther:
  - “Doctrine is heaven, life is earth. ...of doctrine...we do not permit the slightest offense against it. But we can be lenient toward errors of life.” (20)
    - In life we all fall into sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10, 23), thus we all need God’s forgiveness.
    - Through doctrine – *God’s saving truth* – we are set free from our sins (John

8:31-32)! *So without God’s truth we are still in our sins!*

- A comment from Martin Luther:
  - “When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares that we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus: ‘I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God....’” (23)
- Great Advice:
  - “When the conscience is under attack, one must abandon the L completely.” (23)
  - “When we are crushed by L, the only place we can find relief is in the wounds of Christ Jesus and the promise that His blood cleanses from all sin.” (24)
  - “The G is not about our ability to think of Christ but about His promise as the friend of sinners...” (24)

**Review Questions**

- What do the following people need to hear? L or G
  1. “I’m a sinner, so I deserve God’s punishment.”
  2. “I lie sometimes, but so does everyone else.”
  3. “I’m doing okay – I go to church, give, and serve others; I’m not perfect but I know God will accept me.”
  4. “No matter how hard I try, I know I can never achieve what God requires.”

5. "I'm sure God is reasonable; He knows I'm doing the best I can."
6. "My life is a mess; how could God ever accept me?"

**Chapter 3: Making Christ a New Moses:** *Let us never add anything to the Gospel!*

- Additions to the G may seem logical: Christ is good, so Christ **PLUS** must be *better!* However, the Bible says:  
<sup>NAU</sup> Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, **you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**
- Anyone who trusts in **Christ PLUS** is NOT trusting in Christ alone, *thus he is actually trusting in himself.*
- The Bible teaches *Christ alone* for salvation:
  - <sup>NAU</sup> Romans 3:28 For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from works of the Law.
  - <sup>NAU</sup> Galatians 2:16 ...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but **through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be **justified by faith in Christ** and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.
- <sup>NAU</sup> John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. Some clarification:
  - Which Bible books did God move Moses to write?
    - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
  - Do all of those books contain only Law (no Gospel)?
    - No, they contain *both Law and Gospel.*

- Did Jesus sometimes teach Law?
  - Jesus NEVER taught any Law **as a way to earn God's favor.**
  - Jesus did teach believers *how to function as believers* (Mark 12:30-31).
- **Keep the Gospel** – *the good news of God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus – pure:*
  - "When human works are added to the Gospel, the Gospel ceases to be good news about Christ." (27)
  - "Broken sinners do not need instructions in ethics but a word from God that rescues them from the misery of their sin and restores them to peace with God through faith in His promises." (28)
- The Law has its place: It "...exposes the darkness of our unbelief, our failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all things.... But the Gospel contains not an ounce of Law." (29)
  - "Luther noted... Christ is a gift **before** He is an example... The chief article and foundation of the gospel is that **before** you take Christ as an example, you [*by grace through faith*] accept and recognize him as a gift..." (30)
  - "Luther quips that if salvation were dependent on following Jesus' example, we would all be doomed from the start, for who of us has been born of a virgin or walks on water?" (30)
  - Identify an example of faith **before** works...
  - C. F. W. Walther explained the sharp contrast between *earning heaven* and *receiving heaven as a*

*gift: "All other religions [other than Christianity] say to man: 'You must become just so and so and do such work if you wish to go to heaven.' Over against this the Christian religion says: 'You are a lost and condemned sinner; you cannot be your own Savior. But do not despair on that account. There is One who has acquired salvation for you. Christ has opened the portals of heaven...' (31)*

- **The Gospel is so wonderful:** It "proclaims a God who sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but to rescue the world by His death on the cross." (32)
  - <sup>NAU</sup> John 3:17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."
- So what are good works? Let's get this right: They "are not the root but the fruit of faith." (32) F→GW
- **The joy of the Gospel** – *rather than the sadness of the Law* – is the true promoter of good works!

**Chapter 4: The Mix Makes the Muddle:** *We need the full sternness of the L and the full sweetness of the G!*

**Chapter 5: First Things First:** *First we are saved by Christ; then we live for Christ!*

**Chapter 6: Looking in All the Wrong Places:** *Terrified sinners should never look at what they are doing but at what Christ has done!*

**Chapter 7: By Faith Alone:** *God has done everything; He even gives and sustains our faith!*

**Chapter 8: Right Repentance:** *It hammers away at everything a sinner seeks to cling to for security and comfort that is not of Jesus Christ!*

**Chapter 9: The Power of Sin:** *For those who share in Jesus' victory over sin, their lives are no longer dominated by sin!*

**Chapter 10: The Church: Community of the Gospel:** *People are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by their association with churches that rightly teach God's Word!*

**Chapter 11:**

**Evangelical Sacraments: Faith, Not Ritual**

**Works:** *God's gifts are received by faith, not by going through the motions!*

**Chapter 12: Alive by the Gospel:** *Let us understand that being converted, awakened, born again, etc. is God's work to make us alive in Christ!*

**Chapter 13: The Gospel Gets the Last Word:**

*The Law is never to be used on an unbeliever to entice him to stop sinning, thus to become more godly!*

**Please Attend in January for the Continuation of this study!**

- Wednesdays, beginning at 7:00 p.m.
- **Worship-Studies:**
  - *A little worship!*
  - *Mostly study!*
- January 4, 11, 18, and 25