

## LAW AND GOSPEL

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit makes alive.

Martin Luther spoke of the proper distinction between law and gospel. The law is God's law, part of the old covenant, which we think of primarily as the ten commandments. Paul is speaking of that old covenant as the letter that kills. God's law asks more of us than we are able to deliver, calling us to love our neighbors as ourselves when we are not even so very good at loving ourselves. The more seriously we try to follow God's law, the more we realize that we are not measuring up. When Martin Luther tried his hardest to please God by keeping God's law he was driven to despair of having any hope in himself - the law killed his hope in himself.

When you teach Sunday School sometimes you are teaching law and sometimes you are teaching gospel. The temptation that I experience is to want to teach children how to be good (law). Paul tells us that the law (letter) kills, that only the spirit makes alive.

Words that go with the law: obey, do good, be nice, be kind, should, must

When we speak about the law the doer is us.

The gospel is about God and what we can count on from God. Paul says that he is not competent of himself to claim anything as coming from him. He is saying that it is God that he counts on. This is part of the gospel, our counting on Jesus Christ for what I need this day, guidance, the power to follow, faith, hope, forgiveness, eternal life.

When we speak the gospel God is the doer.

Think about last Sunday's lesson in Sunday School. Was the lesson law or gospel? What parts were law? What parts were gospel?

What is the difference in you when teaching Sunday School is full of "shoulds"? What is it like for you when your teaching depends upon God and God's power?