



# *The Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther*

## *Understanding the Difference*

*Between*

*The First Chief Part: The Ten Commandments/The Law*  
*And*

*The Second Chief Part: The Apostles' Creed/The Gospel*  
*The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*

### **What is the difference between the Law and the Gospel?**

The **Law** teaches us what we are to do and not to do.

The **Gospel** teaches us what God has done, and still does, for our salvation.

The **Law** shows us our sin and the anger of God.

The **Gospel** shows us our Savior and the grace of God.

The **Law** must be preached to all, but especially to those not sorry for their sins.

The **Gospel** must be preached to those who are sorry for having sinned against God.

### **A Fuller Explanation from Martin Luther**

“It is sufficiently evident what the distinction is between the Law and the Gospel. **The Law never brings the Holy Spirit**; therefore it does not justify, because it only teaches what we ought to do. **But the Gospel does bring the Holy Spirit**, because it teaches what we ought to receive. Therefore the Law and the Gospel are two altogether contrary doctrines. Accordingly, to put righteousness into the Law is simply to conflict with the Gospel. For the Law is a taskmaster; it demands that we work and that we give. In short, it wants to have something from us. The Gospel, on the contrary, does not demand; it grants freely; it commands us to hold out our hands and to receive what is being offered. Now demanding and granting, receiving and offering, are exact opposites and cannot exist together. For that which is granted, I receive; but that which I grant, I do not receive, but offer to someone else. Therefore if the Gospel is a gift and offers a gift, it does not demand anything. On the other hand, the Law does not grant anything; it makes demands on us, and impossible ones at that.” - **Martin Luther, from the Commentary on Galatians, LW 26, p. 208ff.**



*In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah – James Tissot, watercolor*

### **A BIBLE VERSE FOR US TO REMEMBER**

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” – Genesis 6:5