

About Repentance

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Hebrews 6:1 “Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go onto maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death...” lists repentance as a basic, foundational truth of Christ. That it surely is! Perhaps our Lord will not be disappointed when we consider the foundation of repentance again with this little study.

Sin is the underlying problem for all mankind. That is clear from Genesis 3. So, forgiveness of sin is the great solution to that problem.

Scripture describes the disaster and disastrous results of sin in many ways. Sin loads us with guilt (Isaiah 1:4 “Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, ...”); sin testifies against us (Isaiah 59:12 “Our offenses are many in Your sight, and our sins testify against us.”); sin is spiritual filth and uncleanness (Psalm 51:2 “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Lamentations 1:8 “Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean.”); sin is spiritual disease, all encompassing (Isaiah 1:6 “From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness - only wounds and welts and, open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.”); sin blots our names out of the book of life (Exodus 32:33 “...Whoever has sinned against Me I will blot out of My book.”); sin casts us out of God’s presence (Psalm 51:11 “Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.”); sin sends the Holy Spirit away; Sin robs me of joy (Psalm 51:12 “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...”); sin defiles the earth (Isaiah 24:5 “The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.”); sin sinks us to the depths (Psalm 130:1 “Out of the depth I cry to You, O LORD, ...[verse 3] If You, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”); Sin kills us (Genesis 2:17 “ ...when you eat of it you will surely die.” Romans 6:23 “The wages of sin is death.” Ephesians 2:1 “You were dead in your transgressions and sins.”)

In the face of this disaster called sin the prophets said, “Repent.” John the Baptizer said, “Repent.” Jesus said, “Repent.” His chosen Apostles and Evangelists said, “Repent.” Jesus told Paul He was sending Paul to Jews and Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light, from the authority of Satan to God for forgiveness (Acts 26:17b-18 “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”) Paul summed up his work. “I kept proclaiming to repent and to turn to God, doing works worthy of that repentance.” (Acts 26:20) Paul offered a similar summary to the Christian leaders of Ephesus (Acts 20:21 “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”)

What is repentance? What does it mean to repent? It is the response of the lost, sinful, spiritually sick, blind, trapped, enslaved, dead human being to God’s Law and Gospel, by God’s power and working. Contrition is the word theologians often use for the Spirit-worked response of the sinner to God’s Law message. Words frequently used to sum up the sinner’s responses, by the Spirit’s working, to God’s Gospel message include belief, trust, or faith. Such faith will not occur without contrition. Both contrition over sin and faith in the Savior can be covered by the word repentance.

Sometimes God’s Word uses the word repentance to describe only contrition (Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Acts 20:21 “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must repent to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” Luke 24:46-47 “Jesus told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, ...’”). The context of a verse in which the word ‘repent’ or ‘repentance’ occurs almost always makes it obvious as to whether the word should be taken in the “narrow” sense of contrition or in the “broad” sense of contrition and faith.

When I use the words “repent” or ‘repentance’ in this presentation, most often it is meant in the broad sense. Our Lutheran confessions sometimes refer to repentance in the broad sense as repentance in the proper sense.

We can learn certain things about repentance by looking at the Hebrew and Greek words God chose to have His Prophets and Apostles use for repentance.

In Hebrew there are only two words. Actually, there are many descriptive words for repentance. God uses these many words to describe repentance, to picture it and to call it forth. Yet only two words are regularly used for repentance. The one used most often is **שוב**. “Most often” is an understatement. **שוב** is a very, very common Hebrew word in the Old Testament Hebrew text. Despite its frequent use, the meaning of **שוב** never wandered far from ‘turn’ or ‘return.’ Even the more specialized meanings of the word remained close to ‘turn’ and ‘return.’ [Examples - “to cease” -turn away from; “restore” - return to a former state; “bring back” - to cause to return; “to revoke” - cause to turn away or return to the giver.]

There are at least 200 verses where **שוב** is used for repentance. The word is sometimes even used for the antonym of repentance, namely, falling from the faith, turning away from the Lord. It all depends on what or whom it is one is turning to or from.

Repentance, then, is a turning. In fact, at one and the same time it is a turning from and a turning to. When it comes to repentance, it is a 180° turn, an about face.

In repentance a person turns *from* sin and the host of negatives that go along with sin. In repentance a person turns *to* forgiveness and to the host of great blessings that go with forgiveness. Jesus’ words to Saul at Acts 26:17-18 illustrate this well. (“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...”).

We see just how vital and important repentance is. When repentance happens to an individual the first time, he has been converted, reborn, enlightened, saved, made alive. Everything changes for him.

שוב is such a basic little word, but it is most helpful in understanding what repentance is.

As we shall see, God’s whole Law and entire Gospel is directly involved in God turning people from sin to His forgiveness.

The other Hebrew word is **נחם**. It means most basically ‘to grieve’. It is not used in qal. In niphil the word means ‘lament, grieve, repent.’ In piel it means ‘to comfort, be comforted.’ That seems to be quite a difference in meaning, when, in fact, the meanings are not so distant. If one feels for someone else, he will try to comfort that other person. As I *grieve* for Joe, I try to comfort him. The rare hithpael covers all the meanings of the niphil and piel. The word **נחם** can also mean ‘regret, a change of feeling about something.’

It appears that Hebrew uses **נחם** as a true synonym for **שוב**. Job 42:6 is a case in point. (“I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”) Repentance makes good sense here, or at least contrition. Numbers 23:19 is interesting. (“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”) **נחם** (hithpael) is used for ‘change His mind’. The second half of the verse seems to suggest this meaning. Grief is probably the basic idea in this verse. God does not grieve about anything He said earlier. He never regrets it.

So, **נחם** is a word definitely used for repentance, emphasizing what we’d call contrition, but it can just mean ‘regret,’ too. **שוב** does not mean regret. **שוב** is a real turn around. **נחם** is a change of feeling. It can be repentance. It can be mere worldly sorrow.

It turns out that our Greek New Testament has two words that somewhat match these two Hebrew words.

Before I get to them, however, I should mention a third Greek word that is used for repentance. It is a real equivalent to **נָשׁוּב** but is not used very often for repentance. When it is used that way, it almost never stands by itself. The word is *ἐπιστρέφω*, to turn. In Acts one finds this pairing, ‘repent and turn.’ (Acts 3:19 “Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Acts 26:20 “First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”)

The words, however, that are used for repent and repentance by far most frequently are *μεανοέω* and *μετανοία* respectively.

Nothing is gained by investigating how the *μετανοέω* words are used outside the Holy Bible. The word is rarely used in secular Greek and its meaning among other Greek writers contributes nothing to understanding repentance. The *νοεω* and *νοια* part of the words do bring out a truth about repentance. *νοῦς* is one of those words the Word of God uses like heart, soul, spirit, intestines. We usually think of *νοῦς* as ‘mind’. The greatest commandment is that we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind (*διανοία*), and strength (Mark 12:30). Sometimes one could translate *νοῦς* with ‘heart’ and, in English, would have hit the nail squarely on the head. St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 practically equates spirit and *νοῦς*. (“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. *The spiritual man* makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him:’ But *we have the mind of Christ*.” *Νοῦς* is simply one of those inner things about us human beings. The intellectual and rational part of man is somewhat more in the Greek word *νοῦς* than in the English words ‘spirit’, or ‘heart’. *Νοῦς* in Greek, however, is not nearly as different from heart and spirit as mind in English is different from heart and spirit. I suspect that mind, heart and spirit may be even closer in biblical Greek usage than in other Greek usage.

The previous paragraph makes a point frequently made by the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptizer, and our Lord. Repentance is not only an outward turning. It is a turning in every way, inward and outward. It is first and foremost an inward, mind, soul, spirit matter which, then, naturally will show outwardly. This outward evidence of the inward includes both the fruits of repentance and any outward evidences of sorrow and joyous certainty. Sadly, a person is able to produce the appearance of repentance without repentance. This is the case when the heart (soul) of the sinner has not turned. Such an outward appearance of repentance, without the inward change, is evil in God’s sight. (Isaiah 1:11-15 “The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the LORD. I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of My courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations - I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts My soul hates. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.” Joel 2:13 “Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity.” Hosea 6:6 “I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”)

The *μετα* part of *μετανοέω* might mean ‘change,’ ‘after,’ ‘with,’ or all three. The ‘change’ idea goes well with the turning. The ‘with’ idea emphasizes the inner aspect of repentance. The ‘after- thought’ is probably not prominent in the Bible’s use of the word. Its extra-biblical use certainly did sometimes have that meaning (thinking later). Then the word meant little more than regret.

It seems that at Acts 20:21 St. Paul uses the word, *μετανοία* as a pure synonym for a *שוב*. The NIV even translates it as “turn to God in repentance.” Greek - “bearing witness to both Jews and Greeks repentance to (εις) God and faith in (εις) our Lord Jesus.”

The fruits of repentance, also called the fruits of faith and the fruits of the Spirit, are mentioned as an outflow of repentance but not as part of repentance itself. In other words, repentance and its fruits always go together but are viewed as distinct things.

The other Greek word about which something should be said is *μεταμέλομαι*. It is not used very often. It means grieve and regret. Though not in literal meaning, *שוב* and *μετανοέω* are used similarly in the Bible for repent. *סָנַן* and *μεταμέλομαι* are also used similarly. *Μεταμέλομαι* may be used for repentance, emphasizing the contrition part of the word, but it may also mean just regret, a change of feeling about something. That change of feeling about what one has done can be brought about by mere human effort. Change of feeling can also be brought about by the Law.

The words *סָנַן* and *μεταμέλομαι* direct us to the matter of contrition as a vital part of repentance. Both words get back to the basic idea of sorrow, grieving. The Bible clearly includes sorrow in repentance. God looks for that torn heart, broken heart, contrite spirit.

Here is where God’s Law, as in commandments, laws, threats, rewards, punishments, curses, condemnations and the like, is vital to repentance.

The final goal of God is to save people from sin and hell, to forgive them, and to give them new life, finally ending with eternal life in joy and glory with Him. (2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 1 Timothy 2:3-4 Praying like this “is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” To reach that goal God uses both His Law and His Gospel.

First, by His Law God shows us our sinfulness, both what we call original sin and actual sins; 2) shows us how He reacts to sin with a guilty sentence and with hot wrath, condemnation, and punishment, both temporal and eternal; 3) stirs an appropriate reaction in us to such a fearsome message, namely fear, terror; and 4) produces in us a heartfelt desire to escape this horrible situation. The sinner himself may respond to God’s Law, instead, with stubbornness, with impenitence, with hardening. (Confident faith is not produced by the Law. The Law creates complete uncertainty about salvation or certainty of no salvation. The Mt. Sinai scene produced no reliance on God, only terror. God’s commandments produce no spiritual righteousness. They make our unrighteousness more obvious.)

Let us briefly touch on these different effects of God’s Law.

1) God shows us our sinfulness. By nature people realize they sin. This is because of the natural knowledge of God which includes both His Law in our hearts and consciences. Sin itself, however, badly weakens this awareness. Sin causes people to minimize their sin, to underrate it, to de-emphasize it. You know, nobody’s perfect. Sin will attempt to keep the concepts of our sin and God’s wrath far apart. Sin might suggest that sins can easily be taken care of with a few counterbalancing good deeds. In fact, sin might make people say that at least most people are basically good or, at least, that *they* are not as bad as some other people are etc.

Such notions will never end in repentance. God put His Law into writing to make it fully potent. He intends it to be used. When it is used, it uncovers the sin in us, real sin! It begins to let us know what sin is really all about. In fact, it wakens sin. It makes sin as sinful and terrible as it really is. It increases sin’s sinning. (Romans 5:20 “The Law was added so that *the trespass might increase...*” Romans 7:5, 7-9, 13 “When we were controlled by the sinful nature, the *sinful passions aroused by the Law* were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for deathWhat shall we say, then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! Indeed *I would not have known what sin was except through the Law.* For I would not have known what coveting really was if the Law had not said, “Do no covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind

of covetous desire. For apart from Law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from Law; but *when the commandment came sin sprang to life* and I died ...Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that *sin might be recognized as sin*, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through *the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.*")

The Law may well condemn that which appears good in the eyes of human beings. Isaiah, a believer in his Savior, even includes his own righteousness as filthy rags. It is the Law that enables a person to understand this about even his best efforts. (Isaiah 64:6 "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags..." Luke 17:10 "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are *unworthy* servants; we have only done our duty.'")

If we are worthless when we have done our duty, what are we when we have disobeyed? Disobedience to God is obedience to Satan (Genesis 3).

God's Law tells us, via commands and prohibitions, what it expects of us. This kills us. It makes clear to us that God expects nothing other than righteousness, perfection, holiness in what we do, in what we say, in what we think.

God looks for even more. Perfection involves our very being, our essence. It is to be noted that Leviticus 19:2, Matthew 5:48, and 1 Peter 1:15-16 demand *being* holy, *being* perfect just as God Himself *is* perfect. (Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'" Matthew 5:48 "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." 1 Peter 1:15-16 "Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy.") All those perfect things need to flow naturally, freely, automatically from a nature that is perfectly good and righteous. Such a spiritual, holy nature is called the image of God.

It begins to dawn on us that we cannot even fathom how sinful we are (Psalm 19:12 "who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults." Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?")

Let us keep in mind, however, that God is always fully aware of how sinful we are! As the Law says, for example, "Don't covet" and as the sin in us immediately goes on a coveting binge, it makes us realize that we are indeed sinful by nature, sinful in our essence, from within. Our heart is sinful. No, we were not created that way. We were created in God's image. In Adam's fall, however, we all sinned. (Romans 5:12-14 "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned - for before the Law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no Law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the One to come.") Sinfulness, inner ruin, corruption, death is the way it is now. What a fall!

Out of such a cesspool what could come forth but sins of thought, word, and deed? (Mark 7:21-23 "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and made a man unclean.")

The Law commands us to be holy and to be obedient. It makes wonderful promises for obedience. It threatens terrible punishments for disobedience. The Law is all about doing, obedience, and that includes perfect faith in God, according to the First Commandment. (Galatians 3:10, 12 "All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not *continue to do everything* written in the Book of the Law ...The Law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them.") The oft used expression, "observing the Law" tells the same story.

The fact is that all have sinned, that there is not a righteous person on earth who does what is right and never sins. So, all those Law-promises are worthless to us for none have obeyed. Our conscience condemns us. God condemns us. Even Satan gets in on the act, with an entirely different goal, of course. When the Law is done with us, we admit, confess, "I am sinful and unclean by nature and in thought, word, and deed."

2) Cursed is everyone who does not obey the Law. (Galatians 3:10) So, we are all under that curse. It is really the curse of God. It is His Law. This curse teaches us how God reacts to sin. It is a just, right reaction. It

is the curse of God's fierce anger against sin, (Lamentations 1:12, 15 "Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the LORD brought on me in the day of *His fierce anger*?...The LORD has rejected all the warriors in my midst; He has summoned an army against me to crush my young men. In His winepress *the Lord has trampled* the Virgin Daughter of Judah." Lamentations 4:11 "The LORD has given full vent to His *wrath*; He has poured out His *fierce anger*. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations." Zephaniah 3:8 "...I have decided to assemble *the nations*, to gather *the kingdoms* and to pour out *My wrath on them* - all *my fierce anger*. The *whole world* will be consumed by *the fire of My jealous anger*." Romans 1:18 "*The wrath of God* is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness."); It is the curse of separation from God, from God's goodness (Micah 3:4 "They will cry out to the LORD, but He will not answer them. At that time He will hide His face from them because of the evil they have done." Isaiah 59:2 "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.")

Finally, there is the curse of death, eternal death, hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, punishment without end. (2 Corinthians 3:6 "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life:" Romans 7:10-13 "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.")

Death is no end. Death is separation. Eternal death, hell, is eternal separation from God's love. Horrible! Indeed, the Law kills. The Law definitely lets us know what sin is, arouses the sinful passion already in us, makes the sin more sinful, causes the sin in us to spring to life and so kills us under God's judgment. This lets us know for certain that we have definitely earned the full wage of sin and sinning, namely death. (Hoses 6:5 "I cut you in pieces with My prophets, I killed you with the words of My mouth; My judgments flashed like lightning upon you.") It makes us face the fact that we are sinful from the inside out, top to bottom to begin with.

Mind you, when sin becomes utterly sinful, when sin increases as the Law of God speaks to us, it is not because of a defective Law. It is sin abusing the good and spiritual Law. Even in this way the Law reveals to us how thoroughly sinful we are.

3) The Law shows us to be completely out-of-control, helpless, enslaved sinners (Galatians 3:22 "The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe." Romans 6:17 "....you used to be slaves to sin..." 1 Kings 21:20 "Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," he answered, "because you have *sold yourself* to do evil in the eyes of the LORD.")

The Law increases our sense of guilt. We feel the burning heat of the all-knowing, perfect, righteous, just, sin-abhorring, sin-detesting Judge's anger. (Amos 6:8 "...I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it.")

By the Law we find out that God is angry with us. We learn that the sentence for our sin is death. And we know that death is stalking us all the time.

This frightens us. Terror is the word for it. Consider the reactions of the following persons to God's Law: Israel (Exodus 19:16 "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled."), David (Psalm 38), Peter (Luke 5:8 "When Simon Peter saw (the miracle), he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"), the congregation on Pentecost (Acts 2:37 "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brother, what shall we do?"), Felix (Acts 24:25 "As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.").

4) Such a state is awful. No one wants to go on like this. We want out! (Hoses 5:15b "...in their misery they will earnestly seek Me.") There's got to be a way for a person to escape this fearsome situation, we reason. We might try being a better person. We might even begin to suffer revulsion at our sins. But our consciences keep it up. So, maybe we can try watering down the Law to involving only outward deeds. "I don't commit nearly as many such sins as do lots of other people! And I'm sure going to avoid that preacher." (Micah 2:6 "Do not prophesy," their prophets say. "Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us." Hosea 9:7b-8 "Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac. The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God.") Or, after a sincere effort, I, out of hopeless frustration, finally get angry with God and at the same time just give up on the whole thing and try to put God out of my mind and life altogether. All of this can actually be going on in my heart, mind, and life at the same time. Nothing is getting better, only worse. Dead people can do nothing to help themselves (Jeremiah 13:23 "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and *beyond cure*. Who can understand it?") When the Law has done its work a person is not one step closer to salvation. This is because Christ is not in the Law. As you read the Ten Commandments, you will see for yourself. With no Christ, there is no offer of grace, mercy, hope, forgiveness, life, love or righteousness! Heaven is farther away than ever. Hell is much closer!

If the Law were the only thing a person would hear, hardening or despair would certainly occur. In the name of so called "self preservation" the Law might be resisted, ignored, rejected! And, eventually, God might judge such hardening by handing the hardened person over to what that impenitent sinner insists on doing. Or, a person might just give up, despair. With no Gospel, there could be no hope. "Judgment Day" has come and the sinner has not even gotten to his grave yet! This could happen if a preacher wrongly proclaims nothing but a steady diet of Law or, though the preacher might offer Law and Gospel, an individual only "hears" and applies the Law to himself.

The book of Revelation pictures a hardened, violently angry reaction of people against God in chapter 9 in connection with 'the Woes' and again in chapter 16 in connection with the final plagues. God's intention is clearly and repeatedly stated, to lead the people to repentance. The actual reaction to these increasingly severe Law activities of God is equally clearly presented; the people express their outrage at God! That is blasphemy. In Amos 4, God "preached" with preliminary Law punishments and five times repeats, "Yet you have not returned to Me." So, in chapter 8 God says, "I will spare them no longer."

God gave the Law to prepare people for God's true solution to sin, to sin's guilt, to sin's consequences (curse, condemnation, death) and to sin's power. Christ and His Gospel is that solution. With stunning surprise, after chapters of pounding Law, God announces the unmitigated Gospel at the end of Hosea, restoration to David's fallen tent, constant blessings, not only to a remnant of Israel but to a remnant of Edom, (of Edom!), and then to a remnant of all the nations that carry the name of the LORD.

There is no natural knowledge of the Gospel. It is a mystery. (Ephesians 1:9 "God made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:7-10 "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'—but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.")

In the Bible a mystery is anything unknown and unknowable by natural man. The Gospel and its various aspects are mysteries. If humankind is to know a mystery, there is only one way for that to happen. God must tell people. The Good News is such a mystery made known. God made it known through His Old Testament prophets and, then, most fully, in His Son, Jesus Christ and through Jesus' Apostles. (John 15:26-27 "when the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me. And you also must testify, for you have been with Me from the beginning.")

God works powerfully in and with His Gospel to work a real miracle, to create new people, people born of God, people who trust God and love Him joyfully, freely, automatically by a new nature, a nature in the

image of God. This is truly creation, creation out of nothing. (Ephesians 4:23-24 "...be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Colossians 3:10 "Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." 1 Corinthians 1:28 "He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not -to nullify the things that are...")

The Gospel shows us the same God loving those same sinners. He yearns for them. (Hosea 11:8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zebouim? My heart is changed within Me; all My compassion is aroused.") He handed over His one and only Son for them. His love is immeasurable (Ephesians 3:18-19 "May you have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.") God eternally chose to love the world in Christ (Ephesians 1: 4-6 "God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.") If one may dare say so, the Gospel of all grace in Christ seems to outdo God's holiness (Romans 5:12-20). Of course, Christ is also our holiness. (1 Corinthians 1:30 "It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.")

The Gospel message itself, and what God does by means of that message, the Gospel's effect, is a miracle. Humanity, individually or collectively, did not know the Gospel, could not know it, could not even expect it, anticipate it. The Gospel is unexpected, a real surprise. In fact, on his own, mankind, upon hearing it is so surprised, taken aback, that he well consider it foolishness. (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21, 23 "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ...For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe ...For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." 1 Corinthians 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to Him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.")

The Gospel is the power of God to salvation. Just as the power of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit in and through God's Law, is able to work in people an acknowledgment of their sin and a real terror of God's holy and just judgment against them, so the Gospel, as the Spirit's tool, is able to work a joyous, willing, relieved, grateful certainty, reliance, dependency, confidence, trust, looking to, leaning on God as one's kind, merciful, loving, devoted Redeemer and Savior.

The Gospel is just plain astounding! The Gospel announces as fulfilled, in and by Jesus Christ, every demand of the Law. Jesus, in perfect devotion to His Father's will, sharing exactly the same will, in perfect committed love for all sinners, all the spiritually sick, all the lost, served His Father and the sinners themselves with absolutely everything He lived, thought, felt, said, and did. He was the One who obeyed. (Romans 5:19 "Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.") He did it all for the many. Christ made Himself our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5-6 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which He will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness." 1 Corinthians 1:30 again). His perfect reverence, perfect faith, perfect love for His God and Father and His perfect love for lost mankind according to the entire Law of God was lived as our Substitute. This is the righteousness credited to sinners, to the disobedient. (Romans 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe..." Romans 4:23-24 "The words it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.")

This is only the half of it! Christ Jesus had come as He did, as the eternal Lord God in the flesh, so that He could also die as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2 “Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.”) He had come as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. He made all sin, from Adam’s on, His personal load. (Psalm 69:5 “You know *My folly*, O God; *My guilt* is not hidden from You.” Jesus spoke this verse, too.)

This is exactly what God intended. Indeed, the Father laid this horrific weight on His Son (Isaiah 53:6, 10 “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand.”) The entire guilt of all that sin, the terrible spiritual death from all that sin, and physical death, and, yes, entirely beyond our comprehension, all of eternal death was endured by Jesus, the almighty, infinite God in the flesh, for the world.

Whatever curse, whatever threat, whatever punishment the Law of God justly pronounces against the sinner, it pronounced and carried out on the Sinner in Substitution, the one and only, Jesus. The Gospel message is Jesus, His work, His accomplishments. The Law drives us to admit our sin; Christ’s blood covered our sin. Jesus is our mercy seat. To illustrate the Gospel, God commanded Hosea to redeem the adulteress and to love her.

It is a completely sure and certain message. Even death, as sin’s wages, was defeated in and by Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. All the Old Testament prophets told of forgiveness in the Christ of God. (Acts 10:43 “All the prophets testify about Jesus that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”) The ancient Scriptures of God told the people that the LORD’s Servant, the LORD Himself, sent by the LORD, would die and rise again. Jesus told His disciples and His critics that He’d raise His body from the dead after they had destroyed it, and do so on the third day. (John 2:19, 21 “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ ...But the temple He had spoken of was His body.”) He told His followers that He had authority to lay down His life and authority to take it back again (John 10:18 “No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father.”) Most importantly, He did it. He died; He was buried; He rose on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “What I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”) The grave, death, sin, the Law’s curse were all defeated. God in Christ was victorious and that victory is ours. (1 Corinthians 15:57 “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I John 5:4-5 “Every one born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!”)

It is not surprising that the old, sinful nature still in the Apostles caused them to doubt the first news that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus overwhelmed that unbelief when He appeared to them, opened the Scriptures to them, spent considerable time with them, led them in Bible study and prepared them for the rest of their life’s work as His witnesses. During the six weeks that followed the first Easter Jesus made hundreds of eyewitnesses. (1 Corinthians 15:6 “After that He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time...”) All of this Jesus did to make forgiveness, peace, new life and heaven sure and certain to those hundreds and to everyone else by those hundreds of eyewitnesses. He did it all for the world’s sake, to guarantee full, free forgiveness for all people. (Romans 4:25 “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”)

All the punishments of God, pronounced by God’s holy Law, fell on Jesus and led to His voluntary sacrifice on the world’s behalf. Jesus’ resurrection shows all guilt and all punishments gone in the Savior. The prophets so thundered God’s commandments, anger and punishments against the unbelief of the Israelites and against the unbelief of all the people of all the nations. Sin was destroying them. Even God’s Law preaching by the prophets was motivated by God’s total devotion and dedication to helping those people. Always in the background, even of that relentless Law preaching and those Law activities on God’s part was the

Gospel. (Micah 4:6 “In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief.”) God preached the Law so that He might be able to announce the good news that every threat and punishment was taken away freely and entirely by God Himself. The hearer would see no point to this Gospel apart from the convicting work of the Law first.

So, the prophet Micah can show us the people of the world, all of them, as God’s former enemies, trembling because of God’s Law, yet also coming out of their holes to the LORD in hope. (Micah 7:17 “They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you.”)

We hear Egypt, Edom, Assyria, Babylonia, and the entire world condemned by God’s Law for their pride, cruelty, greed, immorality, and especially for their idolatry. (Habakkuk 2:4-5 “See, he (Babylonia) is puffed up; his desires are not upright - but the righteous will live by his faith - indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.” Zephaniah 1:2 “I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.”) To our amazement, however, we hear God include Egypt, Edom, Assyria, Babylonia, and all the nations among the blessed. The blessing of God in Abraham’s Seed had been promised to all nations. (Micah 7:12, 17 “In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain...” Obadiah 21 “Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD’s.” Isaiah 19:23-25 “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance.”)

This Good News, God’s power unto salvation, by God’s strength, invites its own way into hearts, minds, souls, and lives. By its wooing people with its urgent invitations to seek the LORD, complete with His righteousness (Zephaniah 2:3 “*Seek the LORD*, all you humble of the land, you who do what He commands. *Seek righteousness*, seek humility:...”), with the Gospel’s call to turn to the Lord and to follow Him, gathered as His people, family, sons and daughters, the Gospel makes the unwilling willing, cleanses the spiritual lepers, replaces filthy clothes with clean (Zechariah 3), gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, understanding to the foolish, light for darkness, gives a heart of flesh where only a heart of stone had been, and life to the dead. It makes “Not My People” into “God’s People” and brings mercy to the disobedient. (Hoses 1:10 “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people’, they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”)

Just as Jesus’ word to the physically deaf gave hearing, without that deaf ear contributing anything, or as Jesus’ word to Lazarus’ dead body raised Lazarus, without the corpse helping at all, so it is spiritually. As the Gospel says, “Repent, believe, come, follow,” God (Christ) gives the gift of repentance, the gift of faith, turns us, changes our heart, and provides newness of life. (Luke 5:32 “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”) Every Christian has been called by the Gospel and that Gospel empowered and motivated the response of joyous trust in the Gospel’s Savior (Lamentations 5:21 “Restore us to Yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old...”). God works repentance, both contrition and faith. (2 Timothy 2:25 “Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that *God will grant them repentance* leading them to a knowledge of the truth.” Acts 5:31 “God exalted Christ to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that *He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins* to Israel.” Acts 11:18 “...they praised God saying, ‘So then, *God has granted even the Gentiles repentance* unto life.’”)

In Christ Jesus all the sin of all people has been atoned for, the debt paid, the punishment endured, the curse removed, the death died, sin forgiven, God reconciled, the Law obeyed, all righteousness fulfilled, heaven opened, eternal life assured. Everyone who trusts in Jesus, who died and rose again, shall not perish but have eternal life. He has crossed over from death to life.

The Gospel, in Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion, carried this Jesus to us, to the world. It is also what knocks on the door of the heart and rouses a response. Jesus comes to the heart, not vice versa.

Both the forgiveness of Christ's Gospel and the new heart enjoying that forgiveness is God's work. This work God does by the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. (Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.") Every Christian is God's Work. (Romans 14:15, 20 "If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. *Do not* by your eating *destroy your brother* for whom Christ died ...*Do not destroy the work of God* for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble." Ephesians 2:10 "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.")

A word should be said about the on-going, daily repentance of a believer in Jesus. Such repentance can be spoken of only about one who is a Christian. As a Christian, in so far as he is a Christian, a new person, in God's image, there would be nothing of which to repent. The Apostle Paul, however, reminds us of the fact that there is nothing good in a Christian, *that is, in his old original self*. The old self never gets better, is never converted, does not repent. He is the stuff of evil, close friend and ally of the devil.

The Law must continue to be applied, applied full strength and constantly, to every activity of the sin in us. Luther liked the picture of daily drowning. Paul liked to speak of crucifying him. I like the picture of a club beating my old Adam to a bloody pulp. The Law does these things. The almighty Spirit works by the Law to assist the Christian in this daily struggle against sin.

A Christian will also consider what impenitence—the constant goal of the sin living in us—would cause us to lose, namely, all the blessings of the Gospel. This is a special Law preaching, effective because the loss of Christ and of everything that is ours in Christ would be a curse indeed, and a curse only a Christian can really appreciate. The loss of every blessing does help put the fear of God into that old self. Forgiven people need also always to consider the awesome price paid to atone for every sin. Had only one sin been laid to the account of each person, Jesus would still have had to die spiritually and physically with all of His eternal greatness to free them from hell. Sin is that terrible.

It goes without saying that our new self needs the total Gospel just as regularly to stay alive, to be able to control more and more of the thinking and the doing of the believer by the Spirit. The Gospel is the Spirit's tool for working new life, renewal, fruits.

Earlier in this paper I used some terminology that probably made you think of 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, particularly verses 9-10. (2 Corinthians 7:8-11 "Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it - I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while - yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.")

Paul speaks of a godly sorrow that works repentance and leads to salvation and of a worldly sorrow that brings death. Paul says that he now rejoiced because when he laid down the Law to the sinning congregation (sinning in that they had not worked with an impenitent member of the congregation), it had led the congregation to repent. (Their repentance produced the fruit of applying God's Word to the sinner out of love for him. That too was blessed as that man also repented.)

St. Paul used the two words we have spoken of earlier, *μεταμέλομαι* and *μετανοέω* (*μετανοία*). Paul did not regret, (*μεταμέλομαι*) feel sorry that he had caused them sorrow by his letter. He did, he says, feel sad (*μεταμέλομαι*) about having to do it. Now that they had repented (*μετανοία*) that sorrow was gone and he was filled with joy.

Godly sorrow is literally "sorrow in accord with God." It is sorrow as God wants to create and use sorrow by His Law, sorrow and terror over sin in view of God's wrath and, in this case, the terror of losing Christ, for these people were, after all, Christians. It is sorrow preparatory to hearing God's Gospel (Lamentations 3:32-33 "Though He bring grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He

does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”). It is a sorrowing heart that gladly believes in God’s Son as the Savior from his sin. This changes the sorrow to rejoicing in God’s salvation. Such sorrow is sorrow produced by God’s Law, followed by faith in God’s forgiveness for Jesus’ sake produced by the Gospel. This Gospel-produced trust in Jesus brings salvation. Godly sorrow is sorrow that turns out as God wants it to turn out.

Worldly sorrow is sorrow that is not followed by faith in forgiveness. Yes, this could be sorrow caused by the Law in one form or another. Most of the time it is Law-produced and may indeed involve a sorrowing conscience due to guilt. God’s goal and aim, however, is never realized. Faith in the Gospel does not follow. Such sorrow might lead to self-righteousness or to despair and to hardening. Death will be the outcome. In Revelation some of the pictures of torment surely picture a guilty conscience. Since there is no faith in God’s Gospel, it is worldly sorrow.

There may be no essential difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow at all. But grief remains worldly as long as the Gospel is not believed. The grief may be mere regret, may only be a change in feeling about something because of “getting caught,” or “things not turning out well for self.” We may never know the cause of the grief. I don’t know if Judas merely regretted his action. His conscience may have been in total terror. But Judas did not rely on Jesus’ forgiveness. His was a worldly sorrow. Therefore, unbelief killed Judas.

Always preach both Law and Gospel, not one or the other. (Joel 2:13 “Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity.” Zephaniah 3:8-11, 15 “Wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out My wrath on them—all My fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of My jealous anger. Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve Him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Cush My worshipers, My scattered people, will bring Me offerings. On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to Me, ...The LORD has taken away your punishment, He has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.[and the Gospel continues to the end of the book]).

Preach and teach and counsel the Law as Law, full strength. When preaching, be specific, but don’t accuse all people of every specific sin. Undoubtedly all have broken the seventh commandment but not everyone has shoplifted. Condemn shoplifting as a sin which angers God and against which God hurls His curse. Of course, you would not say, “You’re all shoplifters!” Doing the latter would only blunt the Law, for you will turn the hearers into defenders of themselves instead of humbled hearers of God’s Law.

Get at the root of sin, unbelief. The old man is, after all, an unbeliever! Since repentance first comes to the heart, do not give anyone the impression that changing some outward deed is repentance or even the fruit of it. (Hosea 6:6 “I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”) The radically new heart, soul, spirit, mind, when God works repentance, will produce outward changes, fruits! Original sin is not an excuse for sinning. It is the source of our sinning. The Gospel is no excuse to sin, either. It is the forgiveness of it.

The Gospel needs to be proclaimed. Since the Gospel is God’s ultimate message, the only message that can create a Christian (i.e. work faith in Christ), forgive, apply God’s righteousness, make new, bless, rescue, renew, and give eternal salvation, clearly, then, the Gospel must be the goal, the heart and soul, of our preaching, teaching, counseling and the like. *The Law* is the Gospel’s necessary *servant*.

No “gospelish” Law! No “legalish” Gospel! There is no leniency in God’s Law, none! There is no such thing as a conditional Gospel. Law promises are conditional. Even the most positive sounding Law promises are totally killing (Leviticus 18:5 “Keep My decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.” Luke 10:28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”). If a condition is added to a Gospel promise or Gospel blessing, it is not Gospel any more. We have made it Law. Remember, Law does not create faith, nor keep it, nor strengthen it. The Gospel does!

There is no difference between Law promises and Gospel promises except this one thing: Law promises are always conditional; Gospel promises never are.

Our Law preaching must insist that a sin is sin. Therefore we dare not excuse sin, disregard sin, minimize sin, hide sin, defend a sin, or dispense with God's fierce anger at every sin. We must not suggest that there is any solution to sin except God's one and only solution, Jesus Christ. The Law makes no concessions. A yawn or snicker at God's anger over sin is evidence of some stage of hardening. Never give people reason to yawn or snicker at it.

The Gospel is for the poor (penniless in spirit, in fact), the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the wounded, the imprisoned, enslaved, captive, bound, weighed down, the mourning, the humbled, the meek, the dead. (The Beatitudes, Micah 4:6 "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief.")

What possibly can Christ's forgiveness, His riches, His bread of life and living water, His healing, His freedom, His rest, His joy, hope, grace, mercy; lifting up and life mean to anyone other than these? Nothing! Note also the almost endless variety of ways in which God brings His Law and Gospel words to people. This paper certainly cannot illustrate all of this variety. I hope that it has illustrated some of it, though. Study the prophets, the Apostles, our Lord's own preaching and teaching and you will never run out of variety, different approaches etc. The situation or condition suggests the approach.

Transitions in a sermon are wonderful. But do not use a transition to blend Law into Gospel or Gospel into Law. It has struck me how abruptly the prophets move from Law to Gospel and back to Law again. Yet, it is also true that when the prophets offer the Gospel it is always a magnificent rescue from the Law's threats and punishments as the prophets have proclaimed those threats and punishments. It is always the LORD God doing the rescuing, purely by grace, out of mercy, in love. When one comes to a Gospel passage in the prophets, it is wonderful, a relief. One is very grateful for it and actually amazed at it! It is as if the Gospel is an unexpected gift every time.

If the person sitting across from me is being impenitent, should I not present only the Law to him!? On the one hand, we dare not make him think the Gospel applies to him in his impenitence. (Lamentations 3:42 "We have sinned and rebelled and You have not forgiven.") On the other hand, we ought always let him know that it is the Gospel from which he is excluding himself as long as he does not repent. In this way, the Gospel is made known. One cannot know how quickly the Holy Spirit might work through His Law. Not proclaiming the Gospel could be a disaster.

The whole goal of the entire Bible, all of God's Word, is repentance. The whole point is that God in Christ wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, God's, saving, Gospel truth. Repentance is how Jesus, the Father, the Spirit, save people. Repentance is that basic, that foundational, that important! No one is saved apart from repentance.