

A Few Definitions:

Law– The Law of God is the holy will of God which tells us how we are to be – what we are to do and not to do – what we are to say and not to say – what we are to think and not to think. Jesus catechized regarding His Law: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39).* God's Law requires absolute perfection 100% of the time – no exceptions, no small print, no ifs, ands or buts. Each human being is, by nature, sinful and unclean, and thus, being apart from God, is lost and condemned. Each one of us has sinned against God in thought, word and deed, As such, the Law always accuses the old sinful nature in man – both the Christian and the non-Christian. This will continue until the faithful departs this life and is with the Lord in Paradise, at which instant, the Law will no longer accuse the Christian. In this life, the Law provides no comfort to the conscience and prepares the soul for the Gospel.

Gospel– The Gospel or Good News is that God the Father sent His Son into this world to be the Savior from sin – the world's Mediator and Redeemer. Jesus is the Christ Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus, Who is true God and true man, fulfilled the Law perfectly on our behalf and shed His holy Blood for us beginning at His Circumcision on the 8th day and concluding with the spear thrust following His death by crucifixion. When Jesus suffered on the cross, He atoned for and paid the penalty for every sin of every human being from Adam to the last person born in this world, as well as for the sinfulness of the same. Jesus the Messiah has conquered Satan on our behalf and satisfied the holy wrath of God against all sin. In His Resurrection, Jesus has defeated death. In His Ascension, Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us in Heaven and is always with His own to the end when Judgment Day comes. The Gospel is all about the forgiveness of sins. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19).*

Active Obedience of Christ– As the perfect, sinless High Priest, Jesus took upon Himself all the requirements of the Law and fulfilled God's Law perfectly on behalf of all.

Passive Obedience of Christ – Again, as the perfect High Priest, Jesus allowed or suffered Himself to be the Sacrifice on Whom and in Whom the Divine punishment on account of all sin upon Himself was placed and He perfectly endured the pangs and woes of all people. He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Means of Grace– These are the God-given and Divinely-instituted ways for the blessings of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation that Christ Jesus earned in His Active and Passive Obedience to be offered and given to the individual. The Holy Spirit works by means of His Word in Baptism, Absolution, the preaching of the Gospel and the Lord's Supper to bestow these blessings to the individual, thus creating and sustaining faith in the Good News.

Faith – The Holy Spirit grants the gift of faith and is a blessed, Divine work accomplished through the means of grace according to God's Word. *So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Romans 10:17).*

Good Works – Only Christians are able to do good works, which are also know as fruits of faith; that is, deeds done in faith, according to the Law of God, for the welfare of our neighbor and to the glory of God. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).*