

The great reformer Martin Luther rightly said that, as sinners, we are prone to pursue a relationship with God in one of two ways. The first is religion/spirituality and the second is the gospel. The two are antithetical in every way.

Religion says that if we obey God He will love us. The gospel says that it is because God has loved us through Jesus that we can obey.

Religion says that the world is filled with good people and bad people. The gospel says that the world is filled with bad people who are either repentant or unrepentant.

Religion says that you should trust in what you do as a good moral person. The gospel says that you should trust in the perfectly sinless life of Jesus because He alone is the only good and truly moral person who will ever live.

The goal of religion is to get from God such things as health, wealth, insight, power, and control. The goal of the gospel is not the gifts God gives, but rather God as the gift given to us by grace.

Religion is about what I have to do. The gospel is about what I get to do. Religion sees hardship in life as punishment from God. The gospel sees hardship in life as sanctifying affliction that reminds us of Jesus' sufferings and is used by God in love to make us more like Jesus. Religion is about me. The gospel is about Jesus.

Religion leads to an uncertainty about my standing before God because I never know if I have done enough to please God. The gospel leads to a certainty about my standing before God because of the finished work of Jesus on my behalf on the cross.

Religion ends in either pride (because I think I am better than other people) or despair (because I continually fall short of God's commands). The gospel ends in humble and confident joy because of the power of Jesus at work for me, in me, through me, and sometimes in spite of me.

