

# Law And Grace In the Life Of The Christian

*Explore Your Faith Teaching Series - Explo-24* ©

With Pastor Joseph Rodrigues

## OUTLINE

### **Introduction: Why the need to study this?**

A good understanding of *the distinction between Law and Grace* is vital to the Christian's walk. There are many Christians who are saved by grace but are trying to *keep being saved* by obeying the law (keeping "the commandments").

As in the time of Paul, so also today there are thousands of Christians who claim to be saved by grace but are continually trying to hang on to their salvation by coming back under the law.

The study of 'law' and of 'grace' is extensive. In this study, we are concerned simply to discover sufficient basic truths about 'law' and 'grace' as will enable us to live victoriously, without exploring the deeper theological issues.

*Important:* As with other studies, we must remember that this topic is not to be considered in isolation but rather in conjunction with other related topics (e.g., 'Righteousness', 'Faith', 'Walking in the Spirit' etc.).

### **What is "the Law"?**

**In the OT:** The word '*Tora*' often used for law in general but in the majority of cases is used for commandments which (1) forbid or prohibit authoritatively ('you shall not do this'); (2) order or demand ('do this') and (3) express a command ("you shall do this"). In all cases, it is a command from a person of higher authority to a lower one.

Another word that was used (and closely related) was the word '*miswa*'. It was usually used to express a direct command from a higher authority such as the Lord, king, father etc.

'The Law' found its expression in different 'Codes'

-The Covenant code (Sinai: Exodus) was sanctioned by the Lord as his law for his people.

-The Deuteronomic code (Deut. Chapters 12 to 25) is the basis for codification of Hebraic laws in later times. Many of them are similar to the laws in the Covenant code (e.g. Ex. 23: 15, 16, and Deut. 22:23-29). Various scholars believe that some of this material was added at a later date, the old laws being adapted to new circumstances, and new laws being added according to the needs of later times.

The Holiness code (Lev. Chapters 17-26), so called so because of the phrase "for I the Lord who sanctify you are holy" (Lev. 21:8). Contents comprise mainly stipulations in connection with the sanctuary, the priests, and the covenant community. All the stipulations must be kept by the Israelites and regarded as holy ("set apart", and therefore God's property).

The Pentateuch, which was the final *compilation* of the laws. This took place over a lengthy period, beginning with the period after the exile, when compilations were made, some laws being readjusted to new circumstances and other laws added. The different codes (above) were then placed within the broad framework of the Pentateuch as we have it today. The final form of the Pentateuch was reached only in 450 BC, in the time of Ezra, when it was promulgated by being publicly read (cf. Neh. 8).

There were different *types* of Israelite laws: (refer appropriate chapters in Exodus and Leviticus)

- (1) Civil and criminal law- covering murder and assault, theft, negligence and damage, offences of a moral and religious nature, family law, slavery and the law of retaliation.
- (2) International law - Principles were given for Israelites to live in peaceful co-existence with their neighbours through the forming of treaties. (See Deut. 20:10-14 for 'vassal treaty' principles)

*Important to understand this:* One of the chief characteristics of the Hebraic law was its religious nature. The binding of the laws to the Covenant, ensured that the stipulations must be kept or else the covenant is

broken (and therefore the relationship with the Lord). The keeping of the laws was therefore necessary to secure the blessing of the Lord.

The laws had a twofold character: to promote love to the lord and to love one another. Jesus' summary of the law in Mat. 22:35-40 is the same.

### **In the NT**

The term "law" (*nomos*) is used flexibly and cannot be done justice to in this session. However, in general, the term is used in these ways"

- (1) To denote *the whole of the OT writings* (e.g. Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17; Rom. 3:19a)
- (2) To denote *a part of the OT writings* (e.g. the phrase 'the law and the prophets' is to be understood as comprising the whole of the OT that is not included in 'the prophets'; e.g. Mt. 5:17; 7:12 Lk. 16:16, Acts 13:15)
- (3) To denote *the Mosaic administration dispensed at Sinai*. Paul's expression "under the law" (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:20); and "of the law" (Rom. 4:16) are examples of being under the Mosaic economy, or bound by Mosaic traditions.
- (4) To designate the law of God *as the expression of God's will*. In this instance, the purpose is to show the abiding obligations and sanctity of the laws as the expression of God's character as holy just and good (e.g. Rom 3:20; 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:56; Gal 3:13).
- (5) To denote *an operating or governing principle* (e.g. 'The law of faith').

### **What is "Grace"?**

Essentially, it denotes the unmerited favour and kindness of God towards us because of his love for us.

### **By whom was the Law given? How does grace come?**

Law By Moses (John 1:17; Ex. 20:19; Heb. 12:18-21)

Grace Through Jesus Christ!

Grace is through Christ, *by faith* (Eph. 2:8, 9), works being excluded!

### **Why was the law given? Why was grace given?**

Law To show our transgressions (Gal. 3:19)

So that we would have a knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20)

So that it would bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24)

Grace because God loved the world, not because we merited it (John 3:16)

Because in ourselves we are too weak to be saved (to keep the law by doing good works)

(See Paul's quote in 2 Cor. 12:9 - "my grace is sufficient for thee...")

So that we could be made righteous.

### **What does the Law say? What does Grace say?**

Law 'Obey me and live' (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5). The problem is that no one can keep the law perfectly. Only Christ could fulfill every 'jot and tittle' of the law (see Rom 3: 9-23)

Grace "whoever believes on Jesus Christ has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). A miracle!

The sinner is pardoned through the death of another -the Saviour

Those who receive this life will never perish (John 10:28)

### **What does the Law do? What does Grace do?**

Law Condemns every one who does not keep the command in their entirety (James 2:10)

Makes the whole world guilty before God (Rom 3:19)

Sets up a standard before which people are helpless, effectively cursed (Gal. 3:10)

Grace Is willing to provide the answer to the lawbreaker

Brings salvation (Titus 2:11)

Restores righteousness as a gift (no longer the need to earn merit by works of the law)

### **What are the ramifications of the Law for us who are saved?**

Essentially, does being under grace give us the license to become a law unto ourselves and disregard the Laws of God?

Paul answers this with an emphatic "NO" in Rom. 6:1, 2 ("God forbid!").

Three errors have troubled the church touching the relations of law and grace:

**Antinomianism**, or the denial of all rule over the lives of believers; the affirmation that, because saved by God's free grace, wholly without merit, men are not required to live holy lives.

"They profess to know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient...."(Titus 1:16)

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, .....Ungodly men....turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

**Ceremonialism**, the demand that believers should observe the Levitical ordinances-the Judaizers **requiring** new converts to be circumcised (Acts 15:1).

A modern form of this error is the teaching that Christian ordinances are essential to salvation.

**Galatianism** or the mingling of law and grace. This teaching is that justification is partly by grace and partly by law; or, that grace is given to enable an otherwise helpless sinner to keep the law (See Gal. 6:1-8)

#### **Do we still need do good works? Why and how?**

We are called to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13). By faith, we yield to the indwelling Christ and He uses our bodies to do the will of God by obeying his commands (i.e., good works). The Saviour works through us.

The relationship between 'faith' and 'works' (James' argument - see James 2).

#### **Conclusion:**

The just (i.e., those justified) *shall live by faith*. (Gal. 3:11). *We are saved by faith; we live by faith*  
To go back to keeping the law to retain our salvation is to commit the error that the Galatian church committed (see Gal 3:3).