



Grace Sufficient

A comparison of Law and Grace

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Introduction

In the beginning, there was no need for law. Man and woman were created in God's image. Until disobedience and sin occurred, the union between God and man was perfect. After the fall of man, the law was given which describes the nature of God, and the inability of man to keep it. The provision for atonement and restoration was provided from the beginning. Through God's son, grace was given. The sacrificial blood of Christ covers man's sin, thereby making the born-again acceptable in the judgment. This perfect and complete work of Christ offers man the opportunity to once again experience perfect union with God.

The primary purpose of this study is to show how the God/man relationship can never be re-established by an attempt to live under the bondage of the law. By grace through the atonement of Christ, the born-again believer is reunited with the heavenly father.

Law

The truth is...

It is absolutely true that truth is absolute. Truth always stands for itself, for it is the ultimate and unchanging reality. The reality is that God created man in his image, and man is created to glorify God. Woman is created to bring about marriage which provides companionship, procreation and avoidance of fornication. Marriage was instituted before the occurrence of sin.

The Beginning

(Sin)

After sin and the fall, moral law was given to describe man's relationship with God, and man's relationship with man. Sin entered by man's free will, and with sin came death and separation from God. Because of Adam's sin, everyone is under the curse.¹ Adam's unrighteousness is our unrighteousness. Christ's righteousness is our righteousness. The sin problem is not what we do but what we are. We are born sinners and there are "none righteous."² Because of sin, the law was given for instruction in righteousness until Christ provided justification through his sacrifice. Now faith in the finished work of Christ provides redemption.

The Curse

Living under the new covenant of grace, we are free from the law which brings forth "fruit unto death."³ This cure for the curse of sin was the inimicity⁴ or hostility to be placed between Satan and mankind.

The Covenant of Abraham

The covenant God made with Abraham⁵ precludes the sacrifice of Christ. Abraham's faith rested upon the fact that God would "provide himself a lamb."⁶ The covenant with Abraham came before the giving of the law. Sin was in the world before the Mosaic law, but could not be imputed or credited to anyone until the law was given.^{7, 8} We who are in Christ are not under law, but under grace, therefore sin cannot be imputed to us today.

The forbidden fruit in the midst of the garden was the knowledge of good and evil. With the advent of the written law, man would know what to do, but was unable to do it. The law is just, holy and good⁹ but the weakness of human flesh renders the law ineffective in leading one to righteousness.¹⁰ Anyone seeking to live by the law may be counted as moral, yet will fail in the manifestation of love.

Religion is man's answer to God, Christ is God's answer to man. Man tries to justify himself by doing deeds to prove himself worthy. If man really could justify himself by law or works, then Christ died in vain.

The Covenant of Moses

Moses did not enter the promised land because of disobedience.¹¹ Of the generation that left Egypt; only two entered the promised land. Joshua and Caleb entered because they believed and had faith.

If one looks to the law for guidance they run the risk of attempting to obtain salvation by the works of the law. The Christian cannot please God through the ministry of the law. This is actually what separates us from Christ; falling from the grace of God.¹² Those who live under the law attempt to get to the Holy Place without going through the court of grace. "No man cometh to the Father but by me."¹³ "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."¹⁴ The law is given to show the unbeliever how far below the standard we do live.¹⁵ Under law we find out who we are. Under grace we discover who God is. Grace is God's redemption at Christ's expense.

Law do / Grace done.

The Covenant of Grace

The new covenant of grace Christ brought into the world was prophesied and illustrated throughout the Old Testament. “I will make a new covenant...I will put my law...in their hearts.” “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”¹⁶ The law of Moses points to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and thus to grace.¹⁷

The transition from law to grace is a change from bondage to the law to freedom and redemption through grace. The old covenant focuses on the works of man, but the new covenant focuses on His works. One cannot stand on Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion at the same time. Grace fulfills the law¹⁸ but cannot be added to it. The heart of stone which condemns will be replaced with a heart of flesh which loves.¹⁹ Our religion is a result of who we have become through grace, producing true holiness. His righteousness has become ours through grace.

The Galatians had come to know God through faith in Jesus Christ.²⁰ He had adopted them as His own sons, but they were turning back to the law that had once enslaved them. They were leaving liberty for the slavery of legalism.

During Jesus’ day, the oral interpretation of the law described how to apply the Mosaic laws to everyday life. Jesus never sinned nor did he break any of the 613 commandments of the Torah. The accusations of the Pharisees that Jesus and the disciples had broken the Sabbath laws, came from the oral commentaries, not from the Torah. Around 200 A.D. the Talmud was written to preserve the oral interpretation. It includes approximately 61 books. Most orthodox Jews regard these writings more than the Old Testament. Many Christians today will consider the opinion of man before confirming them with the Bible.

The mistake is often made to believe the man-made list as God's standard of living or life-style. Legalism may cause one to look holy, but they may still have a "heart of stone"²⁵ that does not love with a Godly love.⁷⁰

God's Work as Creator

God the Creator has always been, is now, and ever shall be. He is the ultimate reality which truth describes. Christ created all things. All things were made by Him.²¹ Man was created in His image and for His glory. God is just and without iniquity. "Shall not the judge of all the Earth do right?"²²

God's work as Messiah

God knew man would sin, and would need a redeemer. Messiah would provide the perfect sacrifice for man's forgiveness. He came that all truth may be known.²³ Because of sin the law was given, but this law could never save.

Jesus came to fulfill the law with grace, redemption, forgiveness and love. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant." "...That we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."²⁴

How did Jesus as Messiah establish the covenant of grace? His sacrifice provided the propitiation for sin, thus imputing his righteousness and reconciling the believer. What the law demands, grace supplies. The

abundance of grace is seen in the free and full pardon of all transgression. It is this grace that pardons and sanctifies. All sin is a transgression of the law, but all transgressions of the law are not sin.^{25, 74, 75} The law is powerless to justify or to make righteous.²⁶ Animal sacrifices could not impart righteousness or remove sin.^{27, 28, 29, 30} These sacrifices were merely symbolic of the perfect Lamb which was to be slain once and for all.³¹ Jesus is that propitiation which appeases the wrath of God.^{32, 33}

God's Work as Christ

After the fall, God provided the covenant of redemption as the cure for the total depravity of man. The last words of Jesus on the cross were: "It is finished."³⁴ This meant that his work was completed. The price was paid, the law had been fulfilled.³⁵ The covenant of grace was now a reality. Religion had been man's answer to God. Now Christ is God's answer to man. The cross often gives offence because it proclaims God's unmerited grace³⁶ leaving no place for good works.

Our Nature is Transformed

God does not remember the past of the converted.^{76,77} We were dead in sin. Christ makes us alive. Accepting his forgiveness nails our sin and guilt to his cross. Jesus took the curse of the law and put it upon himself.³⁷ "...Having forgiven you all trespasses..."³⁸ Christ "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments" that we might be reconciled.^{39, 40} Jesus, grace personified, makes atonement a reality.

Imputation⁴¹ means to ascribe or to attribute. Jesus imputes his righteousness to us.⁴² Our own righteousness is of the law and is as

“filthy rags.”⁴³ It is impossible to produce God’s righteousness, but is received through faith in Christ. By grace sin is no longer imputed to us because of Adam’s sin.⁴⁴ Unless covered by the blood of Christ, the sinner will be accountable for his own sin.⁴⁵

The only unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ The sin for which there was no forgiveness was just what the scribes were doing when they called good evil. It was evidence of a moral perverseness so deep rooted that there was no hope of ever being changed. All other sins are forgivable if one is truly repentant. Adultery and divorce are not perpetual, unforgivable sins. Under the covenant of grace, these sins are forgivable. God offers freedom from the bondage of the law. Paul uses marriage and divorce as an example that we cannot live by the law⁴⁷ but are saved by believing in the completed work of Christ.

Jesus teaches about grace and forgiveness in Matthew 18 and in the next chapter gives an example of forgiveness in divorce and remarriage.⁷¹ Jesus is saying that the act of remarriage is an act of adultery. Jesus’ words (in Matt. 5:32 and Mark 10:11, 12) mean simply that entering into an illegitimate remarriage is an adulterous act. This act is forgivable upon repentance. Nevertheless, once that new marriage covenant is sealed, the remarried couple needs to remain married and be faithful to one another. He is not teaching that the ongoing conjugal relationship with the new spouse is forever in a state of adultery—as if God refused to recognize the remarriage as legitimate in any sense.

The woman taken in adultery⁷² was to be stoned to death by the Mosaic law. Jesus did not condemn her but under the covenant of

grace, forgave her and offered her the “light of life.” Deuteronomy 24:1-4 shows that a divorce and remarried person is actually divorced and remarried and not just in an adulterous non-married relationship. The woman is actually the second man’s wife. The marriage is valid and blessed by God.

The contrast between the law God and the God of grace, is expressed by Paul in II Tim. 1:9, 10: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace...” The imputation of his righteousness was ascribed to us freely without any of our works required. Only a simple trust in his work as savior and redeemer.⁴⁸

Our Nature is Spiritual

The body of Christ is not under the condemning ministry of the law.^{49, 50} Since believers are not under law they are beyond its grasp to condemn.⁵¹ “If ye be lead of the Spirit, ye are not under the law”⁵² All that God asked, Christ fulfilled. Whatever is not of faith is sin.⁵³ The law is not of faith.⁵⁴ The law declares every man guilty before God. Law and grace are totally incompatible and can never be integrated. God has a zero tolerance for sin, so sin must be covered by the atonement. The law will never release man from the bondage of sin, nor will it give life.

Allowing the grace of God to work in our life transforms our nature from one of carnality to the spiritual image of Christ. When God moved from law to grace, Israel resisted that move, preferring the old program of rules and regulations.⁵⁵ The old covenant focuses on what you should be doing. The new covenant focuses on what he has done for you. The Galatian believers, under pressure from Jewish legalist, were

considering rejecting the gospel of grace and reverting back to dependence on the Mosaic law for salvation.

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Ephesus to outline the dramatic differences between the two approaches to God.

Grace:	Law:
Based on faith (Ephesians 2:16)	Based on works (2:16)
Justifies sinful men (2:16,17)	Incapable of justification (3:11)
Begins and ends with Christ (2:20)	Makes Christ nothing (5:3)
The way of the spirit (3:2,3,14)	Way of the flesh (3:3)
A blessing (3:14)	A curse (3:13)
God's desire for his people (3:23,25)	Intended to be only a means to an end (3:23-25)
Intimacy with Christ (3:27)	Estrangement from Christ (5:4)
Makes one a son of God (4:6,7)	Keeps one a slave (4:7)
Brings liberty (5:1)	Results in bondage (5:1)
Depends on the Holy Spirit (5:16-18,22,23)	Depends on human effort (5:19-21)
Motivated by love (5:13,14)	Motivated by pride (6:3,13,14)
Centers on the cross (6:12-14)	Centers on works (5:11; 6:12-15)

Grace is the enabling of God that puts within us the power and ability to respond to his will and to do his good pleasure. Our salvation rests upon his grace, not upon our own ability, and through faith we forsake all and trust him.⁵⁶

The sacrifice of Jesus that made possible the cleansing of sin was prophesied by Ezekiel. "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”⁵⁷ This prophesy was fulfilled on the cross. “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”⁵⁸ Everyone who has this hope in him, is cleansed and purified by this blood and water.

In Christ we are freed from the law of sin and death and brought under the new covenant in which there is no imputation of sin. Justification in Christ means that as far as the law is concerned all of its demands have been completely satisfied. We are now declared to be the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.³¹ Our position is in Christ, in the likeness and image of God, having been begotten of his son with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.⁵⁹ His grace gives us liberty in Christ with freedom to serve one another in love.⁶⁰

Our lives are radically changed when we begin living under grace, rather than the law. Believing in God’s work of grace and faith in him justifies and is “counted for righteousness without works.”⁶¹ This revolutionary gospel is not well accepted by those desiring to seek justification by works. In Stephen’s last sermon,⁶² he said that Judaism as they knew it was to be replaced by faith.⁵⁵ Those who love laws will always persecute those who hold to pure faith.⁴⁹ Paul states that we are “servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”⁷³

Many do not believe that we can have such grace for it would exclude doing intense religious duties. These would want to prove their own

righteousness by their works. No law or act of obedience can help us to prepare for heaven, it has to be grace. We obey him because we love him.

Faith acquires what the law requires.

“God demands of us faith itself,
And finds not what he thus demands,
Until by giving, he makes it possible to find it.”⁷⁸

Under law we are always doing and never done. We never accomplish, we never meet the demand made of us. We’re never satisfied, nor find a place of rest. So are we without law? No, we are under the law of Christ, the royal law of the spirit of life. The Holy Spirit becomes our instructor in the word and in our personal walk; in what is beneficial and what is not.

True faith results in actions which reflect who we really are at heart.⁶³ The Pharisees were appearing to be righteous in their actions and dress, but their hearts were far from God.^{64,65} Righteous acts do not make one righteous⁶⁷ any more than sin makes one a sinner. The child of God will sin but will not “continue in sin.”⁶⁶ The born-again live a holy life style because their nature is Godly.⁶⁸ The lost will act ungodly because they still have the carnal nature. The tree is known by its fruit.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Stand upon the mountain of grace. He has **Grace sufficient** to transform the believer into a child of the Most High.

References

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