

LAW & GRACE

**“the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”
(For related information go to theology files #108, #702, #707, #711, #713, #805)**

Key question

How are the moral law of God and the radical grace of God related?

Key text

John 1:17

“For the Law was given through Moses; and grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

Introduction

1. Peter suggests that Paul’s writings can be distorted with the result that those who are “untaught and unstable” are destroyed - II Pet.3:16. Nowhere is that more true than with respect to Paul’s exposition of law and grace.
 2. The theological relationship between law and grace is one of the most important issues in theological systems.
 - a. It was at the heart of the Protestant reformation.
 - b. It is at the heart of what separates orthodox Christianity from every major cult.
 - c. It is near the heart of the distinction between Covenant and Dispensational theologies.
- A. **The Bible uses the word “law” in many different ways** (Hebrew - “TORAH”, Greek - “NOMOS”).
1. It may refer to part or all of the Old Testament Scriptures. (Lk.24:44; Matt.12:5; Jn.10:34,35)
 - a. **The O.T. Scriptures as a whole** (TORAH) Rom.3:10-18 Paul quotes as Law (vs.19) various passages of the O.T. that are not part of the Mosaic covenant or Pentateuch. Isa.28:11-12 is labeled Law in I Cor.14:21.
 - b. **The Pentateuchal portion of the O.T.** Rom.3:21b “to which the law and the Prophets testify.” Gal.4:21b “Are you not aware of what the law says?” He then alludes to Gen.16:15 and 21:2,9.
 - c. **The Mosaic Covenant** (This is Paul’s most frequent meaning of the Law.)
 2. It can refer to any rule of conduct.
 - a. **The law of conscience.** (Rom.2:14-15)
 - b. **The Law of Moses** (It was given as a unit but Christians have recognized three kinds of laws within the Mosaic code.)
 - 1) Commandments (Ex.20:1-21) Moral demands on God’s people.
 1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* Acknowledging God’s presence without marginalizing Him.

2. *Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image.* Being involved with God’s creation without worshipping it.
 3. *Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain.* Bearing God’s name without abusing it.
 4. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.* Respecting the hope of rest.
 5. *Honor thy father and thy mother.* Respecting the integrity of family
 6. *Thou shalt not kill.* Respecting the sanctity of human life
 7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* Respecting the sanctity of marriage
 8. *Thou shalt not steal.* Respecting the sanctity of private property
 9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness.* Respecting the sanctity of human character
 10. *Thou shalt not covet.* Respecting the sanctity of contentment
- 2) Judgments (Ex.21-24:11) Rules that guided civil interactions.
 - 3) Ordinances (Ex.24:12-31:18) Rules that guided ceremonial affairs of worship.
 - 4) The Jews of Jesus day saw the Law as a unit divided into 613 commandments which were further divided into twelve families of commandments which were then subdivided into twelve additional families of positive and twelve negative commands.
- c. **The law of Christ.** (I Cor.9:21; Gal.6:2) This is best understood as the moral standard that is set by the man Jesus. His Spirit expresses His life in His church.
- 1) **The law of liberty** (Jas.1:25) This is the moral standard that flows from the freedom of God’s people as they walk in the Spirit.
 - 2) **The royal law** (Jas.2:8) This is best understood as the Law of Christ.
3. It can refer to any recognized principle of operation.
 - a. **The law of sin and death.** (Rom.7:21-23, 8:2)
 - b. **The law of works.** (Rom.3:27) Note Malachi 3:7 “Return to me, and I will return to you.” says the Lord Almighty.”
 - c. **The law of faith.** (Rom.3:27)
 - d. **The law of the Spirit of life.** (Rom.8:2)
 4. Paul gives the most extensive treatment of the meaning of the Law of Moses and it is in Romans and Galatians that he refers to the topic most often. Key texts — Rom.9:30-10:13; Gal.2:16-4:7.
 5. The eternal ethic of God’s Character and Kingdom are revealed progressively through His law.

<i>Natural law</i>	<i>Mosaic Law</i>	<i>Law of Christ</i>
Subtle ethic	Superficial ethic	Supreme ethic
Eternal	Eternal (as an ethic) Temporary (as a covenant)	Eternal
Creation & Conscience	The Ten Commandments	The life of Jesus
to know that God is there	to know that I need salvation	to know the heart of God

6. John Calvin identified three uses of the Law.

<i>It is a Constraint to sin</i>	<i>It is a Tutor</i>	<i>It is a Guide to living</i>
It is to bring order to society.	It is to lead mankind to faith in Christ.	It is to order the Christian's life.
usus politicus or usus civilis	usus elenchticus or usus pedagogicus	usus didacticus or usus normativus

B. The Law of Moses

NOTE: Three key extended NT texts on the meaning of the law are - **Matt.5:17-48, Rom.9:30-10:13, Gal.2:16-4:7.**

1. Its relationship to Israel.

- a. It was given to **Israel** (not to the church or the world). (Lev.26:46; Rom.2:14, 3:2, 9:4)
- b. It was given to **Israel as a unit**. Attempts to divide the law into moral and ceremonial / civil parts are based on assumptions without clear Biblical support. There is clear evidence from extra Biblical sources that the Jewish community never made a distinction between moral and ceremonial/civil parts. This is an important issue when we read Paul's words concerning the believer's freedom from the Law. It was not just the ceremonial law that he had in view.
- c. It was elaborated by Christ. (Matt.5-7) Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is best understood as an explanation of the Mosaic Law's true demands which were to result in the breaking of the Jews pride so they would "hunger and thirst" for a righteousness that they did not yet have.
- d. It was to be in effect **over a definite period of time** and then terminated as a covenant of blessing and cursing. (Gal.3:19-25)
- e. It was related to the "**law of works**" righteousness. **Ezek.18:9** "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them **will live by them**. I am the Lord." (Rom.10 "4 For Christ is **the end of the law for righteousness** to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness, which is based on law **shall live by that righteousness.**"; Gal.4:21-31). David credits his salvation from Saul to his righteousness (**II Sam.22:21 "The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness."**)
- f. It contains an **implicit promise of eternal life** to its doer. (Matt.19:17; Rom.2:13; 7:10; 10:5; **Lev.18:5 "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live 'if he does them; I am the Lord"**; Phil.3:9; Deut.4:1,8; 28:58-59; 30:15,16,19; 27:26) Note: The N.T. texts (Rom.3:20; Gal.2:16) make it clear that this promise is only in theory for no one can in practice keep the Law so as to gain life.
- g. The Jewish view of "being right with God" centered on race and rules.
 - 1. According to the Hebrew tradition, Jewish people were uniquely elect or chosen. If you were a Gentile, you were excluded from God's favor.
 - 2. Jewish people were required to maintain their part of God's Covenant. God's requirements for them were revealed in the Mosaic Law. Because the Gentiles did not have this Law, they did not know how to please God.
 - 3. The Jewish people knew that no human was morally or spiritually perfect. Being in right standing with God had to do with ones attitude toward the Law, a posture of repentance, and participation in the sacrificial system provided for those who are imperfect.

- 4. Paul’s Gospel, which included Gentiles, and removed people from the obligations of the Mosaic Law, was understandably offensive to devout Jews.
 - h. It was expected that Israel should be able to obey the Law as it was not too difficult for them. (**Deut.30:11** “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.”) It is important to understand that the Law made provision through animal sacrifice for pardon from sin so that the one who failed to keep a part of the moral law could make things right. With this provision, life under the Law was manageable.
 - i. It is “**eternal**” (Lev.16:24; 24:8). The Hebrew term used here means “lasting for an age”. The same term is used for the Levitical priesthood in Ex.40:15, which the book of Hebrews tells us came to an end with Christ. It must be noted that to the extent that the Law reflects the unchangeable holy nature of God, it abides forever. This is to be distinguished from its role as a covenant.
 - j. **Jesus’ teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom** in the Synoptic Gospels regularly describes how one enters the kingdom of God, or how one inherits eternal life, or how one is saved. The gift of salvation or the Kingdom is by grace. It is however entered or received by obedience. This reflects the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant more than the New Covenant and the Gospel of Grace as expressed by Paul.
 - 1. The Sermon on the Mount is focused on obedience to the Law not faith in Christ. Matt.5-7;
 - 2. Costly discipleship is necessary for salvation. Matt.10:22,32,33,37-39; 16:24-27; 24:9-13; Mk.8:34-38; 9:43-48; 10:13-31; Lk.9:21-26; 12:4-9; 14:25-27.
 - 3. Obedience brings life. Matt.12:49-50; 18:8-9; 21:23,43; 25:1-13, 31-46. For more information on the uniqueness of Jesus’ Gospel see theology files #713, #805.
2. In its relationship **to the Gospel it is a tutor**. “the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ” Gal.3:24

<i>The Law reveals our sin</i>	<i>The Law reveals Christ as sinless</i>	<i>The Law reveals the meaning of the Cross</i>
The Law produces pain, shame, & longing for Christ.	The Law authenticates Christ as a worthy sacrifice.	The Law’s demands for punishment of sin are fully satisfied.

- a. It reveals God’s holy character and as such is a guide for all who bear His image.
- b. It reveals man’s sinfulness. (Rom.3:20, 5:20, 7:7,12,13)
- c. It is a minister of death and bondage. (Gal.4:3,9; II Cor.3:6,7,9; Rom.7:5)
- d. It prepares men for the gospel. (Gal.3:24)
- e. It foreshadowed things to come. (Heb.8:5, 9:23, 10:1; Col.2:17)
- f. It was fulfilled by Christ.

Matt.5:17 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.”

This passage can have the meaning of “**satisfy the demands of.**” Jesus respected the Law by himself fulfilling its demands rather than putting it aside.

Rom.10:4 “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

The work “end” is a translation of the Greek term TELOS which means “goal” (perfect example) in one text - I Tim.1:5, but it most often means “**termination.**”

“Nowhere does Paul say that Christians are to “do” the law, and nowhere does he suggest that any but Christians can “fulfill” the law. “Doing” the law refers to that daily obedience to all the commandments that were required of the Israelite. “Fulfilling” the law, on the other hand, denoted that complete satisfaction of the law’s demands that comes only through a Christian’s identification with Christ (Rom.8:4).” Douglas J. Moo, *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, Zondervan, P359

- g. It was an appeal to the flesh. (Rom.8:3 “for what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh,” 7:18-25; Heb.7:18 “For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness”)
 - h. Law and grace primarily denote, not two constant aspects of God’s word to us, but two successive eras in salvation history.
3. Its relationship **to the Christian life.**

NOTE: Paul’s teaching is decisive simply because the issue of the Mosaic law and the Christian was one that Paul had much greater need to address. As the “apostle to the Gentiles,” he was used by God to open the doors of the Christian church to Gentiles who had never had any relationship with the Mosaic law.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, Zondervan, P323

a. **It is to be used lawfully.**

I Tim.1:8-9 “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious for the ungodly and sinners,”

- 1. Those **above** the Law - need to be broken before God by the Law.
 - a. **Paul’s example: Phil.3:4** “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh . . . as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”
 - b. **Rom.3:19-20** “Now we know that whatever the Law says , it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”
 - c. **Rom.7:9-10** “9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;”
- 2. Those **under** the Law - need to be liberated from the Law.
 - a. **Paul’s example: Rom.7:18,24** “18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. . . . 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”
 - b. **Gal.3:12** “However the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, He who practice them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.”
 - c. **Rom.7:6** “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

3. Those **free** of the Law - need to be guided by the Law of Christ yet they are motivated to obey by grace not fear of the condemnation of the Law of Moses.
 - a. **Paul’s example: Rom.6:14** “. . . you are not under law, but under grace.” **Rom.7:4,6** “4 you were made to die to the Law through the body of ‘Christ, . . . 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound.”
 - b. **Gal.5:13** “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”
 - c. **Titus 2:11-12** “for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desire and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,” (See also Rom.12:1-2, Eph.4:1-3, Col.3:1-4)
 - d. **I Cor.9:20-21** “20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, through not being without the Law of God but under the law of Christ.”

Three mistakes we can make with the Law

<i>Live Above the Law</i>	<i>Live Under the Law</i>	<i>Live Outside the Law</i>
I have no respect for God or myself as His image bearer.	I seek to gain and keep God’s love and favor through disciplined obedience to the Law.	I use my freedom to feed the lusts of the flesh.
A seared conscience is the result.	Guilt or pride is the result.	Divine discipline is the result.
They need to be broken by the Law.	They need to be liberated from the Law.	They need to be guided by the Law.

- b. **It is upgraded by the law of Christ.**
 - **Heb.7:12** “For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”
 - **Heb.7:18** “For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”
 - **I Cor.9:20-21** “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ,”
 - **Acts 11:15** suggests that the coming of the Spirit was “the beginning” (of a new era).
- c. **As a covenant it was terminated by Christ.**

Note: Jesus did not solve the believer’s problem with the Law by empowering the believer to fulfill the Law but rather by fulfilling the Law Himself and then removing the Law as a Covenant with blessings and cursings conditioned upon human performance.

- **Col.2:14** “having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”
- **II Cor.3:11** “ For if that which fades away (vs.7 “the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones”) was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.”
- **Eph.2:15** “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,”
- **Gal.3:19** “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.”
- **Heb.8:6-7** “He is also the mediator of **a better covenant**, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.”
- **Heb.8:13** “When He said, “A new covenant,” **He has made the first obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.” **9:15** “And for this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant**, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The Law of Moses

A Covenant of Works Temporary A Tutor to our Faith Removed by Christ	A Reflection of God’s holy nature Perpetual A Guide to our Behavior Embellished by Christ
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- 1) **Jesus redeemed people from under the law.**
 - **Gal.4:5** “in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law,”
 - **I Cor.9:20** “though not being myself under the Law”
- 2) **Jesus freed believers from the old covenant.**
 - **Gal.5:1-6** “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.”
 - **I Cor.6:12** “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”
- 3) **Jesus removed believers out from under the law.**
 - **Gal.4:21-31** “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? --- “So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.”
 - **Gal.5:18** “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”
 - **Rom.6:14** “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”
- 4) **Jesus rendered believers dead to the law as a means of achieving righteousness.**

- **Rom.7:1,4,6** “the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?” “you were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ,” “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound,”
 - **Rom.10:4** “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”
 - **Gal.2:19** “For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.”
- 5) **Jesus set aside the law by replacing it with a different (higher) standard.**
- **Heb.7:12** “For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”
- 6) **The law that was set aside included the 10 commandments.**
- **Jn.1:17** “**For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.**”
 - **Gal.4:21-31** “**One covenant is from Mount Sinai** and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. . . . Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.” “**Cast out the bondwoman and her son,**” (vs.30)
 - **Col.2:14** “having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (The debt against us was our failure to fulfill the moral law.)
 - **II Cor.3:11** “For if that which fades away (vs.7 “the ministry of death, in letters **engraved on stones**”) was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.”
- d. **The Law is not effective in Christian sanctification in that it only condemns.**
- **Rom.7:9-10** “And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;”
 - **Gal.3:3** “³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁵ Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?”
- e. **The Terrorizing work of the Law in the Christian life when wrongly used.**

<i>Challenging the strong to live by performance</i>	<i>Condemning the sensitive to live under guilt</i>	<i>Hardening the religious to live with pride</i>
“the mind set on the flesh is death”	“wretched man that I am”	“eat not, touch not”

- f. **Its relationship to faith** (from John Piper’s *The Future of Justification* pp.197-201)
- 1) The Law in its short-term design, demands perfectly doing the 613 commandments of the Pentateuch in order to have life – Gal.2:10,12; 5:3; 6:13; Rom.4:2; 10:5)
 - 2) The recipients of this Law (Israel and, indirectly, all the Gentiles) do not submit to God or his Law and cannot – Rom.8:7.
 - 3) The effect of this Law on sinful Israel is:
 - a. the awareness of latent sin – Rom.7:7
 - b. the increase of sin by its becoming exceedingly sinful – Rom.5:20; 4:15.
 - c. the multiplication of transgressions – Rom.5:20; 7:13.

- 4) The Law imprisoned everything under sin (Gal.3:22) and was designed to kill rather than give life (II Cor.3:6).
- 5) The Law was not of faith (Gal.3:12) in the sense that its demands appealed to the flesh. This is not to say that it does not serve a vital role in showing us our need for “faith righteousness” through the Cross of Christ.
- 6) The righteousness of faith through Christ was revealed (made clear) after the Law (Gal.3:23-25) even though expressed before the Law (Gal.3:5-8).
- 7) The long-term design of the Law was to lead to Christ – (Gal.3:24).
- 8) The Law is not against faith (Rom.3:31) in that it sets us up to respond to Christ in faith (Gal.3:21-22). This is the long-term purpose of the Law.
- 9) While the Law offered life it could not deliver it nor was it ever intended to do so. Its purpose was to bring all humanity to a realization of its need for redemption (not reformation).

g. Answering questions.

- 1) Was not Paul arguing **against “legalism”** rather than “the Mosaic law” in his negative comments about “the Law?”
 - a. There is no good evidence that Paul ever uses the term *nomos* “law” to refer to “legalism” or to a “misunderstanding of the law.” When he wants to speak of legalism, he speaks of “seeking to be justified by the law.”
 - b. Most of the negative statements Paul makes about the law come in contexts in which he has unambiguously identified the law as the law given by God not man’s faulty interpretation of the law. (Rom.3:19-20)
 - c. Paul views God’s work of redemption in Christ as the answer to the problem posed by the negative effects of the law. Sending Christ to die on the cross implies that the situation from which we had to be rescued was not the subjective one of misunderstanding or misusing the law, but the objective one of being imprisoned under its sin-revealing and sin-provoking powers.
- 2) Some texts are cited to suggest that the law as a covenant has not ceased.

Matt.5:17-19 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law . . . but to fulfill” The word “fulfill” does not mean “ratify or confirm” but to “live out or complete” as in Matthew’s use elsewhere in his gospel (1:22, 2:15,17,23, 3:15, 4:14, 8:17). It also is important to realize that the New Covenant did not begin until after the death of Christ. Christ lived under the Old Covenant.

Mark 7:1-23 “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” Jesus ministered under the law.

Rom.7:12,14,22 “the Law is holy, spiritual, etc” There is no argument here. The temporary tutor is not evil but good.

I Tim.1:8 “the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,” The key is using it lawfully.

4. Summary

“As a whole, the Mosaic Law is both “spiritual” (Rom.7:14) and a killing “letter” (Rom.2:28-29; 7:6; II Cor.3:5-7), both valid “until heaven and earth disappear” (Matt.5:18) and “fulfilled” in Christ (Matt.5:17), both “upheld” by the gospel of faith (Rom.3:31) and no longer the “supervisor” of those who have faith (Gal.3:25). I am forced by the exegetical data to maintain each of these statements.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, Zondervan, P225

Three postures of Jesus before the Law

<i>He elevates its standard</i>	<i>He embraces its sanctity</i>	<i>He eliminates its sting</i>
“You have heard it said, but I say . . .”	“I have not come to destroy but to fulfill.”	“abolishing in His flesh the enmity . . .”
He raised the bar so that all would be humbled.	All that it demanded was fulfilled by Him.	He set all believers free from the Law’s Covenant curse.

C. The Law of Christ

1. The Law of Christ consists of prescriptions and principles that guide the life of the Christian under grace.
 - a. The moral standards of God’s holy character (the **eternal law of God**) are expressed:
 1. — **subjectively** and imperfectly in human conscience (**natural law**),
 2. — **objectively** but superficially in the Old Covenant (the **Law of Moses**),
 3. — **fully** and internally in the New Covenant (the **Law of Christ**).
 - b. The Law of Moses:
 1. Is **terminated as a covenant system** of blessing and cursing because of the cross.
 2. Is a **perpetual but superficial guide to understanding the eternal law of God** that governs the lives of God’s people in every age.
 3. Is refined (clarified) as a moral guide in the law of Christ.
2. **Prescriptions** (normative and universally applicable):
 - a. Positive commands: I Thess.5:16-18; Rom.13:1; I Cor.11:28; etc.
 - b. Negative commands: Rom.12:2; I Cor.6:7; II Cor.6:14; Eph.4:30; etc.
 - c. Rules (policies made by leaders in the body): Eph.4:11-12; I Tim.3:5; Heb.13:7,17
3. **Principles** (applied by individuals in individual circumstances):
 - a. The principle of **GLORY TO GOD**. (I Cor.10:31; Romans 15:6)
 - b. The principle of **LIBERTY**. (I Cor.6:12; Gal. 5:13)
 - c. The principle of **EXPEDIENCY**. (I Cor.6:12)
 - 1) In relation to self
 - a) Will it offend my conscience? (Rom.14:22-23)
 - b) Will it gain control over me? (I Cor.6:12)
 - c) Will it drag me down? (Heb.12:1)
 - 2) In relation to others
 - a) I am to be selfless in my relationships. (I Cor.10:24; Phil.2)
 - b) I am to be loving in my relationships. (I Cor.8:1-13; Rom.14:1)
 - (1) I am not to cause a brother to stumble (I Cor.8:13; Gal.6:2)
 - (2) I am not to cause an unbeliever to stumble (I Cor.10:27-30)
 - c) I am to promote unity. (Rom.15:5-6; I Cor.1:10; II Cor.13:11; I Pet.3:8; Col.3:14)

- d. The principle of **EXAMPLE**:
 - 1) Christ (Rom.8:28; I Pet.2:21; Jas.13:15; I Jn.2:6)
 - 2) Old Testament (I Cor.10:6; Jude 7; Jas.5:10)
 - 3) Other believers (I Pet.5:3; I Tim.4:12; Phil.3:17, 4:9; I Cor.4)

D. **Life under Law and Grace**

1. The **right attitude of the Old Testament believer** or TRUE ISRAEL
 - a. The believer's faith in the promise of God was the basis of his gracious acceptance by God. (Rom.4; Gal.3:6-7 "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.")
 - b. The Mosaic Law:
 - 1) guided the believer's life in the Old Testament.
 - 2) demonstrated to the believer his weakness.
 - 3) foreshadowed better things to come.
 - c. The gospel was good news to the Old Testament believer.
 - 1) It freed him from the condemnation of the law.
 - 2) It brought his old nature to death with Christ (consequently rendering him dead to the Mosaic Law system).
 - 3) It called him to follow a higher law (the Law of Christ) in a new and better way (the power of the Spirit through faith).
 - 4) The Mosaic Law was holy and spiritual (in that it came from God) but it was outdated by the new covenant in Christ. To revert to the old law and its system of dependence upon the efforts of the flesh was a great threat to the free manifestation of the Spirit in obedience to the law of Christ.
2. The **wrong attitude of the Old Testament unbeliever** or PHYSICAL ISRAEL
 - a. The Mosaic Law presented an opportunity for the flesh of the unbeliever to justify itself through meritorious works apart from faith. (Jn.5:45 "the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.")
 - b. The gospel was a stumbling block to the Old Testament unbeliever.
 - 1) It insulted the efforts of his flesh in rendering them worthless.
 - 2) It robbed his flesh of its power by doing away with the Mosaic Law as an active functioning entity.
3. Four fundamental **principles** of life under grace:
 - a. **Personal salvation, justification, and forgiveness of sins** are solely on the basis of God's sovereign grace through man's faith apart from any meritorious works on man's part, either before or after salvation. (Rom.9:10-24, 3:19-31)
 - b. **Man's abiding presence in God's family** is in no way dependent upon man's meritorious conduct either before or after salvation, but solely upon the grace of God. (Rom.8:26-39)
 - c. **Man's spiritual growth** is by grace alone and in no way dependent upon his meritorious efforts to keep the Law of Moses or any other law. God's acceptance and grace is the only legitimate motive for Christian obedience. (Rom.12:1-2)

Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men teaching us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,”

- d. **Man’s relationships with his brothers in Christ** are to be governed by the same kind of grace that God has shown toward His church. (Rom.15:7 “Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”) This acceptance is not conditioned upon keeping the law.
4. **Legalism:** is a fleshly attitude which conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self and gaining merit with God rather than glorifying God because of who He is and what He has done.
 - a. A legalistic attitude under the Mosaic Law would be one that would obey the law in order to gain merit with God and thus be blessed by Him (Pharisees). The correct attitude would respond to the law in obedience out of reverence for God and to His glory (David).
 - b. A legalistic attitude under grace can be illustrated by the man who would pray every day for his brother in order to gain God’s favor for doing good and gain self-respect and praise among men for being a good Christian. The correct attitude can be seen in the man who prays faithfully for his brother because of God’s goodness to him (the one praying) and because of love for the brother.
5. God’s grace is a principle of relating which is unconditional. It is contrasted with “law,” and applicable not only for our eternal state but also our present life.
6. God’s grace is best understood in the presence of our sin (Rom.5:20)
- E. **Fundamentals of Grace** (from the first chapter of *Grace*, by Lewis Sperry Chafer)

1. **Grace Is Not Withheld Because of Demerit**

This fact about grace is more evident, perhaps, than any other. It is the sense of demerit more than anything else, which impels a soul to cry out for the kindness and benefits of grace. So, also, grace finds its greatest triumph and glory in the sphere of human helplessness. Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to withdraw it in the presence of human failure and sin. In fact, grace cannot be exercised where there is the slightest degree of human merit to be recognized. On the other hand the issue of human sin must be disposed of forever. Christ the Lamb of God, having taken away the sin of the world, has by His cross forever disposed of the condemnation of sin. He has by the cross, created an entirely new relation between God and man. Consequently, men are now either accepting or rejecting Christ who has borne their sins. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). There is no middle ground. All questions of demerit have been banished. Thus God is righteously free to exercise grace in *every* case. Salvation is by grace alone.

2. **Grace Cannot Be Lessened Because of Demerit**

God cannot propose to do less in grace for one who is sinful than He would have done had that one been less sinful. Grace, is never exercised by Him in making up what may be lacking in the life and character of a sinner. In such a case, much sinfulness would call for much grace, and little sinfulness would call for little grace. The sin question has been set aside forever, and equal exercise of grace is extended to all who believe. It never falls short of being the measureless saving grace of God. Thus grace could not be increased; for it is the expression of His infinite love: it could not be diminished; for every limitation that human sin might impose on the action of a righteous God has, through the propitiation of the cross, been dismissed forever.

God does not ignore or slight the fact of human guilt and sin; for He has met these issues perfectly and finally for all men in the death of His Son. There remains no demerit, nor degrees of demerit, to be considered or recognized. By grace there is now offered alike to *all* men *all* the infinite resources of the saving power of God. The grace of God is, therefore, exercised in perfect independence of human sin, or any degree of human sin.

3. Grace Cannot Incur a Debt

An act is in no sense gracious if under any conditions a debt is incurred. Grace, being unrecompensed favor, is necessarily unrecompensed as to obligations which are past, unrecompensed as to obligations which are present, and unrecompensed as to obligations which are future. Grace must always remain unadulterated in its generosity and benefit. How emphatically this is true of the grace of God towards sinners! Yet how often this aspect of divine salvation is perverted! Infinite and eternal transformations are wrought by the power of God when He exercises His grace. He is thereby glorified and sinners are saved. Such far-reaching results cannot fail to satisfy and delight Him eternally; but He remains *unrecompensed* for His salvation through grace. What He does He bestows as a *gift*. Rightfully a benefit cannot be called a gift if it is paid for before, at the time, or after. This is a fundamental truth of the Word of God, and it is imperative that it be kept free from all confusing complications.

When a recompense for the gift of God is proposed, every element of salvation is obscured, and the true motive for Christian service is sacrificed as well. The Scriptures everywhere guard these two truths from such perversion; for, in the Bible, salvation is always presented as a *gift*, an unrecompensed *favor*, a pure *benefit* from God (John 10:28; Rom.6:23). And, in like manner, no service is to be wrought, and no offering is to be given, with a view to *repaying* God for His gift. Any attempt to compensate God for His gift is an act so utterly out of harmony with the revealed Truth, and exhibits such a lack of appreciation of His loving bounty, that it cannot be other than distressing to the Giver. All attempts to repay His gift, be they ever so sincere, serve only to frustrate His grace and to lower the marvelous kindness of God to the sordid level of barter and trade. How faithfully we should serve Him, but never to repay Him! Service is the Christian's means of expressing his love and devotion to God, as God has expressed His love to those whom He saves by the gracious things He has done. Christian service for God should be equally gracious.

It therefore becomes those who have received His gifts in grace to be jealous for the purity of their motives in service for Him. Unwittingly the grace of God is too often denied by well-meaning attempts to compensate God for His benefits. No semblance of the most vital facts about divine grace can be retained unless salvation is, in its every aspect, treated as a *gift* from God, and Christian service and faithfulness is deemed to be only the expression of love and gratitude to God.

According to the Scriptures, salvation is never conditioned on human faithfulness, or on the promise of human faithfulness. There is no payment required, past, present, or future. God saves unmeriting sinners in unrelated, unrecompensed, unconditioned, sovereign *grace*. Good works should follow; but with no thought of compensation. Christians are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph.2:10); they are to be a "special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14); and "those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). Thus, and only thus, are "good works" related to the gracious salvation from God through Christ Jesus. Grace is out of question when recompense is in question.

4. Grace Is Not Exercised in the Just Payment of a Debt

The fact is self-evident that the payment of an honest debt could never be an act of grace. In no circumstances, however, is the recognition of this truth more important than when grace is declared to be the present divine plan for the salvation of sinners. If God should discover the least degree of merit in the sinner, this, in strict righteousness, He must recognize and duly acknowledge. By such a recognition of human merit, He would be discharging an obligation toward the sinner and the discharge of that obligation toward the sinner would be the payment, or recognition, of a debt. "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt" (Rom.4:4).

It is therefore imperative that every vestige of human merit shall be set aside completely if an opportunity is provided whereby pure grace may be exercised in the salvation of men. For the sole purpose that pure grace might be exercised toward men, the human family has been placed under the divine judicial sentence of sin. It is obviously true that all men are sinners both by nature and by practice; but the present divine decree goes far beyond this evident state of sinfulness wherein one man might be deemed to be more, or less, sinful than another; for God, in this dispensation, which began with the cross, has pronounced an equal and absolute sentence of judgment against all, both Jew and Gentile. Men are now "condemned already" (John 3:18); they are "sons of disobedience" (Eph.2:2); not on the ground of their own sinfulness, but on the ground of their federal headship in fallen Adam. Men are now judicially reckoned to be in "disobedience" (Rom.11:32); they are "under sin" (Rom.3:9; Gal.3:22); and they are "guilty" (Rom.3:19). Thus all human merit has been disposed of absolutely and forever, and there is no longer the slightest possibility that, because of personal merit, a divine obligation may now exist toward any individual. The sole divine object in thus universally and judicially disposing of all human merit is clearly revealed: "For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Rom.11:32). Also, "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal.3:22).

That God now saves sinners by grace alone and apart from every human merit is the teaching of His Word: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:8-10).

In this passage the only order, which can exist between divine grace and human merit is made clear. Man is permitted to *do* nothing until God has *done all* that His grace designs. "Good works" grow out of, and are made possible by, the gracious work of God. To this exact order all revelation concerning divine grace is in agreement.

A striking emphasis is given to the fact that God now saves by grace alone when the biblical doctrines of salvation by grace and the believer's rewards for service are contrasted. Salvation, being always and only a work of God for man, is always and only by *grace* alone; while rewards, being always and only that which is merited by the faithful service of the Christian, are always and only based on *works*. Human merit is always in view in the divine bestowment of rewards; and the grace of God is never mentioned in connection with His bestowment of rewards (I Cor.3:9-15; 9:18-27;

II Cor.5:10). So, also, human works are never included as forming any part of the divine plan of salvation by grace.

An act ceases to be gracious, therefore, when it is a recognition of merit, or the payment of a just debt. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom.3:24).

5. Grace Is Never the Over-Payment of a Debt

Grace is no longer grace if it is complicated in the slightest degree with the payment of a just debt. It can never be that which is added to, or a part of, a righteous transaction. A bounty may be added to the payment of a debt—an extra amount above the full measure due; but in no case should this extra amount be considered a matter of pure grace. The character of the bounty thus added would, of necessity, be qualified to some extent by the relation of the bounty to the debt. The bounty will be either more, or less, than it would have been had it stood alone. Inevitably it will be affected to some degree by the righteous transaction with which it is combined. In the Word of God, as in common usage, the word *grace*, in its exact meaning, precludes any complications with other acts or issues however righteous and just. Grace speaks of a gift, not of barter or trade, however unequal. It is pure kindness, not the fulfilling of an obligation. An act in order to be gracious must stand disassociated and alone. Divine salvation is, therefore, the *kindness* of God toward sinners. It is not less than it would be had they sinned less. It is not more than it would be had they sinned more. It is wholly *unrelated* to every question of human merit. Grace is neither treating a person *as* he deserves, nor treating a person *better* than he deserves. It is treating a person *graciously* without the slightest reference to his deserts. Grace is infinite love expressing itself in infinite goodness.

Through the death of Christ by which He took away the sin of the world, and through the divine decree, which has constituted all to be "under sin," grace is free to save in *every* case, and only grace can save in *any* case. Divine grace is never decreased or increased. It offers a standardized, unvarying blessing to every individual alike. The blessing is measureless since it represents in every case no less than *all* that God, being actuated by infinite love, can do.

6. Grace Does Not Appear in the Immediate Divine Dealings with the Sins of the Unsaved

It is probable that no point in the Gospel of God's saving grace is so misunderstood, and, consequently, so misstated as the revealed truth concerning the immediate divine dealings with the sins of the unsaved. It seems most difficult for the mind to grasp the fact that, as revealed in God's Word, God does not deal with any sin in mercy, or leniency. The sinner is never forgiven because God is big-hearted enough to remit the penalty, or to waive the righteous judgments. Any presentation of divine forgiveness, which represents God as directly exercising clemency toward a sinner is a fatal detraction from the meaning of the cross of Christ, and is a disastrous misrepresentation of the truth contained in the Gospel of His saving grace. Those who dare to preach the Gospel should give to the cross its true place of vital importance as given to it in the Word of God. How can God utter a more alarming warning on this point than is disclosed in the revelation of the unrevoked anathema upon all who pervert the Gospel of grace? "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8,9).

Turning from human speculation to the Scriptures of Truth, we discover one basic fact: The Lamb of God has already "taken away" the sin of the world (John 1:29). The fact that Christ as substitute, has *already* borne the undiminished righteous judgments of God against sin, is the sole ground upon which divine forgiveness is now exercised. The forgiveness of God toward sinners, therefore, is not an immediate act of grace; it is rather a judicial pardon of a debtor in view of the fact that his debt has been fully paid by another. We could not know how *much* He paid; yet, though unable to measure redemption, we may rejoice in the fact that *all*, even to the measure of the righteous reckoning of God, is absolutely and eternally paid by Christ. It is not a question of the relative benefits, which might possibly

accrue to the sinner under one form of forgiveness or another—were he forgiven graciously, or in strict justice; it is a question of the *basis* upon which *any* divine forgiveness can be extended righteously. This righteous basis has been provided in the cross. By Gospel preaching, sinners are to be told that they may now stand forever pardoned before God: not because God is gracious enough to excuse their sins; but because there is plentiful redemption that is in Christ Jesus through His blood (Rom.3:24; Eph.1:7). Being free to forgive at all, God is free to forgive *perfectly*. On no other ground can the marvelous statement,— "having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col.2:13), be understood. This Scripture is addressed to Christians and it exactly defines the scope of divine forgiveness, which is theirs. It likewise indicates the measure of forgiveness, which is offered to the unsaved.

When God thus forgives, absolutely and eternally, through the cross of Christ He is acting as Judge. By this judicial decree, He sets aside forever all condemnation. Such judicial forgiveness, which guarantees an unchangeable standing and position in sonship, should not be confused with the Father's forgiveness toward His sinning child, which is wholly within the family relationship, and which restores lost fellowship and joy to the child of God.

Every unsaved person is under the three-fold sentence of sin. He is a sinner *by practice*, a sinner *by nature*, and a sinner *by divine decree*. God deals with this three-fold aspect of sin by a three-fold achievement in grace. There is *forgiveness for man* in view of the fact that he is a sinner by practice; there is *imputed righteousness for man* in view of the fact that he is a sinner by nature; and there is the *divine decree of justification for man* in view of the fact that he is a sinner who, by divine decree, is "under sin."

Judicial forgiveness itself is not an act of grace, nor is judicial forgiveness a mere act of divine clemency for some particular sins of present moment to the sinner: judicial forgiveness covers *all* sin, and by it the sinner is, as to possible condemnation, pardoned *forever*. This pardon covers *all* sins past, present, or future. God the Righteous Father will, in infinite faithfulness, correct and chasten His sinning child, and the sinning child will need to confess his sin in order to be restored into fellowship with his Father; but the Father will never *condemn* His child (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom.8:1 R.V.; I Cor.11:31-32). The forgiveness of God toward the sinner is, then, made possible only through the cross and is never an act of immediate grace, and, when it is free to be extended at all, it is *boundless*. It contemplates and includes *all* sin. It forever absolves and acquits the sinner.

Though divine forgiveness results in a position for the sinner wherein there is no condemnation, this fact should in no wise be confused with the deeper aspect of God's saving grace wherein He justifies the sinner. Forgiveness cancels every debt before God, but justification declares the sinner to be forever judicially righteous in the eyes of God. One is subtraction, the other is addition; and both are righteously made possible through the cross.

Of the various divine undertakings in the salvation of a sinner, some are acts of divine justice, and some are acts of the immediate, super-abounding grace of God. Those acts, which deal with human unworthiness and sin are acts of justice. These include forgiveness, justification, death to the law, freedom from the law, and the whole new creation. All this is made possible through the cross of Christ and, therefore, is not accomplished by an act of immediate grace. On the other hand, those aspects of salvation wherein God is revealed as imparting and bestowing His benefits are said to be immediate acts of grace. These include the gift of eternal life, the imputed righteousness of God, and every spiritual blessing. Limitless grace is seen in the love of God, which provided the cross; but when that cross *is* provided, every saving act that is based upon it becomes an act of *justice*, rather than an act

of immediate *grace*. "That he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom.3:26).

7. **Grace Does Not Appear in the Immediate Divine Dealings with the Sins of the Saved**

The divine dealings with the sins of the saved are similar to the divine dealings with the sins of the unsaved in one particular, namely, what God does in either case is done on the ground of the cross of Christ. By that cross *all* sin, whether it be that of saint or sinner, has been righteously judged, and the ransom price, which satisfies every demand of infinite holiness, has been paid. By His death, Christ provided the sufficient ground for both the salvation of the unsaved, and the restoration of the saved. It is because of what has already been accomplished in the cross concerning the sin of the world, that the unregenerate are freely forgiven and justified. This is a part of God's saving grace, and is wrought on the sole condition that they *believe*.

That there is no greater demand imposed upon the unsaved than that he *believe*, is due to that which Christ accomplished on the cross. He wrought in behalf of sinner and saint in bearing the sin of the world, and every requirement of infinite justice is met for all in the finished work of Christ.

The revealed attitude of God toward all men is that of *grace* alone. Therefore He does not need to be coaxed or persuaded. With His hand outstretched to bestow *all* that His grace can offer, it is highly inconsistent to plead with Him to be gracious, or to coax Him to be good. By the unvarying teaching of God's Word, and by the inexorable logic of the accomplished value of the cross, the forgiveness and blessing of God to the unsaved is conditioned upon *believing*, and to the saved it is conditioned upon *confessing*.

It should also be noted that, according to this revelation, the sinning saint is never before any tribunal other than that of his own Father. The eternal relationship between the Father and His child can never be set aside. The Father may correct and chasten His erring child (I Cor.11:31, 32; Heb.12:3-15), and through confession the child may be restored to the place of fellowship; but all of this is wholly within the inner circle of the family and household of God. Condemnation, which would expel the child from the place of a son, is forever past. Nor does the sinning Christian draw on the mercy and favor of God when he is restored to fellowship in the household of God. How easily mercy and favor might be exhausted and overdrawn! On the contrary, the Christian, sheltered under the blood of propitiation, and standing in the merit of his Advocate, is on a basis where no past offenses have accumulated against him; for he is cleansed and forgiven under the legal justice of the Father. The justice of God is made possible and is righteously demanded in view of the shed-blood of His own Son.

Let it not be supposed that this divine plan of restoration of the child of God to the Father's fellowship will react in an attitude of carelessness on the part of the Christian. The sufficient answer to this challenge is three-fold: (1) True confession is the expression of a very real repentance, or change of mind, which turns from the sin. This is the exact opposite of becoming *accustomed* to the sin, or becoming *careless* with regard to it. (2) This very revelation is given, we are told, not to encourage, or license us to sin; but rather that "you may not sin" (be not sinning). According to the Scriptures and according to human experience, the believer's safety in the faithfulness and justice of the Father and the advocacy and propitiation of the Son, is the greatest incentive for a holy life. It is clearly revealed that God has, by other and sufficient means, guarded against all careless sinning on the part of those whom He has eternally saved through the merit of His Son. And (3) God can righteously deal with sin in no other way than through the absolute value of the blood of His Son; but when sin has been laid on the Substitute, it can never be laid back on the sinner, or

on any other. In the cross of Christ, the question of a possible condemnation because of sin is adjusted forever. Mercy and grace can never be co-mingled with divine justice. Boundless grace is disclosed in the provision of a perfect propitiation for the sins of the believer; but the application of the propitiation is never gracious; it is none other than the *faithfulness* and *justice* of the Father. Therefore grace does not appear in the forgiving and cleansing of the Christian's sins.

The Point

Christians should feel secure in the radical grace that is in Christ where they are free from the condemnation of the law while guided by the moral boundaries of the law which reflects that eternal, holy, nature of God.

Response

Head

I am to understand that:

As a Christian, I am free from the Law in Christ to the extent that fear of condemnation is gone.

Heart

I am to believe that:

I am completely secure in Christ.

Hands

I am to behave by:

Looking to the law as a guide but not as a covenant with blessing and cursing attached.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. Specific facts you should know.

- a. How is the word "law" used in the Bible?
- b. List five texts that speak of the believer's freedom from the law.
- c. What is legalism?

2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.

- a. How is the Law of Moses related to Israel, the church, the Christian?
- b. What is the meaning of Matt.5:17 and Rom.10:4?
- c. In what sense did Christ bring an end to the Law?
- d. Does freedom from the Law include the 10 commandments?

3. Questions you should wrestle with.

- a. How can Paul's teaching about freedom from the law be abused?
- b. What should and should not be said about our freedom from the law if we are to follow the Biblical teaching?