

## Law versus Grace

There are many today who are confused when comes to understanding the differences between the Mosaic law or the old covenant and Christ's law the new covenant. While there are many different aspects we could examine on this subject, the main focus on our study tonight comes from,

**John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Based on this verse and several other misunderstood verses some have come to conclusion that there was no grace under the law of Moses and that there is no law under the system of grace. Another way to put this is that grace and law are mutual exclusive. Is the true? Is this what the Word of God teaches? These are the questions I will be answering tonight. Before we jump in and examine what John 1:17 is saying, the first thing I want to do is to see if grace can be found in the OT. But before I do that I want define what Grace is. The most common definition is unmerited favor. The act of receiving a gift from God that we do not deserve and cannot earn or merit. When you think about this definition there should be many examples that come to your mind from the OT which would qualify as grace. The creation of the earth and everything in it is a great example of God's Grace. But the first example I want to look at comes from the patriarchal period and has to do with Noah.

We should all be familiar with this story of how all of mankind had turned is back on God and he was ready to destroy all of them. Notice this as we read from,

**Genesis 6:6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." <sup>8</sup> But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.**

Here we have just barely begun our study and we have already found grace in the OT. But the next question becomes what kind of grace is God giving Noah? The answer can be found as we continue reading the story of Noah starting in,

**Genesis 6:13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. <sup>14</sup> " Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. <sup>15</sup> "And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. <sup>16</sup> "You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks*. <sup>17</sup> "And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die. <sup>18</sup> "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark -- you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.**

God was offering Noah and his family salvation. The NT summarizes this story very well in,

**Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**

You see God gave the gift of Grace to Noah. Clearly we can see God grace working outside of the New covenant but another very important thing that we learn from Noah is that he received his gift of grace from God in the same manner that we receive his gift of grace today. Please keep in mind that Noah gift of Grace was his salvation but in order for him to accept this grace it took an obedient faith. He could not be saved until he obeyed Gods commands. It took Noah 120 years to build that ark and he followed Gods instructions very carefully and did not add anything to them or take anything away.

**Genesis 7:5 And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him.**

It should be easy for us to see that Noah could not have possibly accepted God gift of grace of salvation until he completed what God asked him to do. When God asks you to do something that is a law or commandment showing that Grace and law work together hand and hand and they are not mutual exclusive. The same thing is true under the NT as well. God has offered to us the gift of salvation but in order to accept it we must have an obedient faith and obey those commands that God has given so that we may accept Gods gift of grace. When Noah obeyed Gods commands it did not make him earn his salvation just as we cannot earn our salvation by obeying Gods commands. No, instead Noah and each of us today are simply meeting Gods requirements for us to accept his gift of salvation.

Our next OT example comes from Moses and the children of Israel. God grace was given to them in the fact that they were brought out of Egyptian bondage.

**Exodus 33:12 Then Moses said to the LORD, 'See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' <sup>13</sup> 'Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.' <sup>14</sup> And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' <sup>15</sup> Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. <sup>16</sup> 'For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.' <sup>17</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.'**

Once again we find grace being given in the OT. Now notice what is said after Moses receives the second set of the 10 commandments in,

**Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, ...**

You see not only was God merciful he was gracious because his grace was available in the OT as well. Our next example comes from,

**Numbers 21:<sup>5</sup> And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." <sup>6</sup> So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup> Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.**

In this account the children of Israel sin against God and he gives them what they deserve death by a serpent. However, we see that God provides a way for them to be saved even though they did not deserve it. This was act of Grace. Jesus himself draws a parallel from this graceful act in,

**John 3:14" And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**

Obviously the big difference here is that Christ healing is for the whole world and the bronze serpent was just for those who had bitten by a viper. But we clearly see that it was an act of grace on Gods part.

Our next examples comes from the story of Jericho. Notice what the Lord tells Joshua,

**Joshua 6:2 And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor. <sup>3</sup> "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. <sup>4</sup> "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> "It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."**

Again we see the same pattern repeated. Jericho was Gods Gift to the children of Israel and you see that they had to do something to accept this gift from God. They had to march around Jericho and blow the horns and shout. This took an obedient faith and they were not allowed to have this gift until the followed Gods commands once again showing Gods gifts going hand and hand with being obedient to his law.

As you can see there are many example of Gods grace in the OT but I want to really drive this point home so I want to show a few more verses that show the grace of God in the OT

**Ezra 9:8 "And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.**

**Psalm 84:9-12 <sup>9</sup> O God, behold our shield, And look upon the face of Your anointed. <sup>10</sup> For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. <sup>11</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. <sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!**

**Proverbs 3:34 <sup>34</sup> Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble.**

There should be no doubt that grace was defiantly available during the OT times.

**The second thing we need to find out is there law under the system of Grace.**

First of all we have already shown that Grace and the obedient faith to Gods law worked together under the OT. Now we must simply find out if the same is true under the NT. I believe the main reason people are confused about law and Grace is because when they see the word law used in the NT they assume this means all law when in fact most of the time the word law in NT is referring to Moses law or old covenant. Let me give you an example.

**Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.**

**Romans 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.**

You see when people read these verses giving all law as the meaning for the word law they draw the conclusion that there is no law under the system of grace. But that is not what is being said here. Paul is talking about the Mosaic law and not all law in general. He is saying that you cannot be justified by the works of the law of Moses that is to merit your salvation, no it is through an obedient faith. Jesus delivered us from the law of Moses which was a tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Jesus nailed the requirements of the old covenant to the cross (Col.2:14) and ushered in a new covenant (Heb. 8:13, 9:15).

Before we even begin to look at verses that clearly show that we are under grace and law today, I want you to think about this idea of a new covenant. As you look through the Bible and read about the various covenants that are made with God is there always stipulations in keeping that covenant? Of course there is and the same is true in the NT. God has provided us with his will and to be in the right relationship with him we are to be obedient to that will.

**Hebrews 5:8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. <sup>9</sup> And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,**

The mere fact that we under a covenant and contains commands that we are to obey proves that we are both under and law and Grace at the same time. Now look at this next passage.

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

This is another high abused verse that people use to say that you are saved by grace alone even though the word alone is not used. Again this passage is teaching the exact same thing I have been talking about. We cannot merit or earn our salvation but we must accept God gift of Grace through an obedient faith. That is what the verse has in mind when it says you are saved by grace through faith. Grace is Gods part an obedient faith is our part. Now watch this,

**Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

This a great passage to use along Eph 2:8 to help people understand the difference between works of merit and works of obedience. Those who teach that grace and law are mutual exclusive would say that baptism can be a part of salvation because is it work of the law. Paul makes very easy for us to see that baptism is a part of our faith in Jesus Christ. Look at the text again. Notice we are made sons through faith and very next verse says that those that had this faith which is a obedient faith were baptized into Christ. So here we see both faith and baptism working together as a part of making us sons of God. So you see baptism is work of obedience and not a work of merit. Col 2:12 also describes the baptism process as being a work of God. So, when Jesus says,

**John 14:15 " If you love Me, keep My commandments.**

This tells us clearly that there is law to follow under the system of Grace. Unless a person wants to argue that a command is not a law. Besides all of this the word of God specifically calls the new covenant a law in several places.

**. Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death**

This verse points out that both the old and new covenants are to considered as law.

**1 Corinthians 9:21 to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law;**

**Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

**James 1:25** calls the new covenant the perfect law of liberty and says we will be judged by this perfect law of liberty in **James 2:12.**

I believe have shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that there grace in the OT both under the Paterical period and under the law of Moses. I have also shown that there law under the system

of grace and how they work hand and hand. Now that we have examined these questions in detail let us know return back to verse,

**John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Based on what we have looked at so far we can certainly know what this verse is not teaching. It is not teaching that there was not grace under the law of Moses and that there is no law under the system of Grace. Now if a person take a verse out of context and doesn't search the Bible for what it teaches on this topic it would be easy for a person to interpret a verse wrong. That is why it is important for us to take the sum of Gods word and not some of Gods word. For example let take this verse in John 1:17 and look at logically all by itself. If this was all we had to go by then we would have to conclude the Law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. If we say that there is no law under grace then we must also say that there is no Grace or Truth under law. Now think about this would mean that Gods law under the OT was lie if try to use verse alone without trying to understand its full meaning. I don't know of to many people who claim to be Christians that would be willing to call the OT a lie.

So what is John saying here? Well, lets look at it context,

**John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' " <sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.**

The point John is making is the same principle through out the NT. He saying that revealing of Gods truth and Grace through Christ is at it highest form. Jesus became flesh and humbled himself before and suffered many hardships and died on the cross for our sins and then overcame death and is not sitting at the right hand of God. All of these things show the greatest possible Grace that God could give us. Through out the OT it was foretold that something greater coming and that Jesus Christ. Nothing has or every will exceed this gift of Grace.

**2 Corinthians 3:9 For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.**

Paul is saying that the old law had glory but the new covenant has much more Glory.

**Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,**

Again we see that under the NT grace abounds much more and nothing exceeds the grace we are under now. Yes they had grace back then but it was leading up to the ultimate gift of Grace Salvation to Jesus Christ.