

Law and Grace

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A message exploring the meaning and purposes of Law and Grace

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What is Meant by 'Law' in Scripture?

- **Torah**
 - In its simplest sense, the Law in the Bible refers to God's instructions given to His people
 - The Hebrew word often translated as "law" is Torah, which means "instruction" or "teaching"
 - The Torah isn't just about legal codes, it's about life – it comprises the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and includes stories, commands, moral lessons, and covenant promises
 - The Ten Commandments are the most famous summary of the Law (*see Exodus 20*) – they cover loving God (no idols, keeping the Sabbath, honouring His name) and loving people (honouring parents, avoiding murder, adultery, theft, lies, and coveting)
 - Beyond the Ten Commandments, the Law includes over 600 other commands that guided Israel's worship, diet, festivals, and community life
 - When God gave the Law at Mount Sinai, it wasn't meant to crush Israel, it was meant to shape them into His holy people: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (*Leviticus 19:2*)
 - So when we ask 'What is the meaning of the law in the Bible?' the answer is this: the Law is God's way of teaching His people how to live in relationship with Him and with others.

- **The Law was a Covenant Relationship**
 - The Law wasn't handed down by God simply as a list of rules to be obeyed
 - The Law was given in the context of a relationship – God was saying "Now that I've redeemed you (out of Egypt), here's how to live as My covenant family"

- The Law was like wedding vows between God and Israel – it showed commitment, loyalty, and love
- The people weren't saved by keeping the Law, they were already saved from Egypt by God's grace – but the Law helped them know how to live as God's chosen people
- The Law is God's Holy Instruction – given to reveal His character, expose human sin, and point us to our need for grace
 - The Law Reveals God's Character – it shows us God's holiness, justice, and love
 - The Law Exposes Human Sin – it is like a mirror, showing us who we really are and how far we fall short of God's glory
 - The Law Points to Grace – it was never the final answer – it was like a tutor, preparing God's people for Christ

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3: 24

- The Prophets
 - The Prophetic books of the Old Testament (Isaiah to Ezekiel and Hosea to Malachi) – give further teaching on God's law and our relationship with Him
 - Though His Prophets, God was teaching understanding about His Law and explaining how His people were to live in relationship with Him
 - As with the Law – the Prophetic books point to Christ
 - They often give deep insight and understanding into Yeshua as Messiah and Sin Bearing Saviour (as, for instance in *Isaiah chapter 53*)

Yeshua and the Law

- Yeshua Does Not Destroy or Replace the Law

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Matthew 5: 17-18

- Yeshua did not come to Destroy the Law or the Prophets
 - The Law Stands Until Heaven and Earth Pass Away
 - For Messianic believers this means that the Law (Torah etc) and the Prophets (their Teaching) still are writings we ought to cherish and live by in our relationship with God and our fellow men and women
- Do not think that Yeshua's teaching in these verses (*Matthew chapters 5 to 7*) is intended to alter, abrogate, or replace the moral content of the Old Testament Law and Prophets
- Yeshua neither gives a new law nor modifies the old – but rather explains the true significance of the moral content of Moses' law and the rest of the Old Testament

- The phrase "the Law and the Prophets" speaks of the entirety of the Old Testament scriptures, not the rabbinical interpretations of them

- **Yeshua Fulfils the Law**

- This speaks of fulfilment in the same sense that prophecy is fulfilled – Yeshua indicates that He fulfils the law in all its aspects
 - He fulfils the moral law by keeping it perfectly
 - He fulfils the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything to which the law's types and symbols pointed
 - He fulfils the judicial law by personifying God's perfect justice
(see *Matthew 12: 15-21* quoting *Isaiah 42: 1-4* below)

*But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust."***

Matthew 12: 15-21

- **Till Heaven and Earth Pass Away ... Till All is Fulfilled**

- Yeshua emphasizes both the inspiration and the enduring authority of all of God's laws in scripture

*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*** ***Matthew 5:18***

- He specifically affirms the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT Law as the Word of God – down to the least jot and tittle
- We should not think that the New Testament supplants or completely abrogates the Old Testament – but instead fulfils and explicates it
- For example, all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law are fulfilled in Yeshua and no longer is there a requirement for them to be observed by Christians (see *Colossians 2: 16-17*)

'So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.'

Colossians 2: 16-17

- **Not One Jot or One Tittle (*Matthew 5: 18*)**

- Jot – the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet 'Yod' – which is a meagre stroke of the pen, like an accent mark or an apostrophe the smallest letter similar to a dot
- Tittle – the apex of a Hebrew letter (figuratively the least particle) – like the serif in modern typefaces
- Yet not one jot or tittle is erased by Yeshua's coming – the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain – and, in fact, the mysteries behind them are now revealed in the brighter light of the gospel

- These – from the smallest letter to the deepest mystery – have not passed from the law, say Yeshua
 - To quote Matthew Henry *“The care of God concerning his law extends itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iotas (jots) and the tittles; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, be it ever so little, shall be preserved.”*
- **Yeshua Teaches Obedience To God’s Commandments** (*Matthew 5: 19*)
 - After speaking of the enduring authority of all of God’s laws, Yeshua emphasises the need to be obedient to them

“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5: 19

- These commandments: that is... The Law and the Prophets – see the preceding verses *Matthew 5: 17-18*
 - Yeshua is clearly teaching that we should obey God’s commandments – the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes are here in focus
- **Yeshua Teaches of the Need for Righteousness**
 - Yeshua then speaks of the need for righteousness to enter the kingdom

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5: 20

- The Pharisees had a form of righteousness, through observance of the law, but it was not sufficient on its own
- To enter into God’s presence a deeper and more fundamental righteousness are required
 - This comes through relationship with the Father – which itself comes through the sacrificial work of His Son, Yeshua
 - Cleansing and salvation are needed, which comes through the sacrifice of Yeshua, God’s Son, and through faith in Him - leading us into relationship with the Father... becoming His children... fellow heirs with Yeshua
- Relationship with Yahweh was the key to cleansing and salvation for the Old Testament saints – and it is for us... but it comes through faith and by God’s Grace of providing salvation... through His Son’s sacrifice for our sin

The Need for Righteousness

- **Unattainable by Our Own Efforts**
 - God’s righteousness demands obedience to His law

‘For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”’
Romans 10: 5

- Paul is quoting from *Leviticus 18: 5*
- **God’s righteousness demands perfect and continual heart obedience to His law**
- **This is a standard to which we can never attain**
 - The Scriptures consistently testify that in God’s sight “no man living is righteous” (*Psalms 143: 2*)

***For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.
Ecclesiastes 7: 20***

- Paul writes to the Roman church, quoting *Psalms 14: 1-3*:

‘As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”
Romans 3: 10-12

- **God’s Righteousness and Our Need**

- **God demonstrates that He is righteous by imprinting His eternal moral law on the conscience of every person He creates**

‘For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.
Romans 2: 12-16

- His moral law is always for the ultimate good of His people
(see *Deuteronomy 10: 12-13*)
- It is to protect us from harming ourselves and others and to point us to the best path of life
- But we cannot measure up to His standard – we are “all under sin”

‘What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.’ ***Romans 3: 9***

- **God makes it clear that His righteousness requires a payment for the sins of men and women**
 - His righteousness demands that sin be punished by His wrath
 - His Word states that justifying the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (*Proverbs 17: 15*) – so how can He now “justify the ungodly” and it not be an abomination?
 - God justifies in the past and present on the basis of Christ’s work
- **God expresses His righteousness in wrath against sin by showing His patience**
 - Judgment is God’s “unusual . . . extraordinary work” (*Isaiah 28: 21*)
 - He will pour out His wrath on the unrepentant (see *Psalms 7: 11-13*)
 - Yet He is slow to wrath (*Nahum 1: 2-3*) and yearns for people to escape His judgment – indeed He promises to rescue His people (Jew and Gentile)

- For this reason He gave the Law and He sent His Prophets to warn people to flee from the coming wrath
- The mission of the Messiah's first coming was not to judge the world but to bring salvation from judgment (*John 3: 17*)
- God's patience and kindness is designed to lead us to repentance and into righteousness (*Romans 2:4–5*)
- God does not wish for any to perish

'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' **2 Peter 3: 9**

- God's wrath is not to be understood in human terms as a fit of passion, but it is rather His loving and righteous reaction to sin and His determination to judge it
- The final judgment is a "revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (*Romans 2: 5*)
- **A Day of Righteous Judgment Awaits**
 - God has manifested His righteous judgment in the past – e.g. the flood in Noah's day and Sodom and Gomorrah
 - He displays His wrath in the present day by giving people over to their sin, removing His restraint, and letting their sin intensify itself (*see Romans 1: 18–32*)
 - There also will be a future display of God's wrath during the tribulation period (*Revelation 6: 17*) as well as His judgement at the end of time... the 'great white throne judgment' (*Revelation 20: 11-15*)
 - Final judgment has not been placed into the hands of man but rather into the hands of an eternal righteous God
 - Evil will not be tolerated forever – unrighteousness will not win or even profit in the long run
 - The truth of God's pouring out His wrath on the unrepentant not only demonstrates that He is righteous but also serves as an encouragement for God's suffering servants to faithfully persevere in the midst of injustice

Righteousness through Faith

- **How Are Old Testament Saints Saved?**
 - If Something More than Law is Needed – How Is Righteousness to be Obtained?
 - We know that for us – since Yeshua's first coming our righteousness is through Him and His atonement for our sin by His shed blood on the cross
 - It begs the question – that's OK for the Church but how are Old Testament Saints made righteous
- **Salvation has always been the same: by faith in the promises of God**
 - To illustrate this truth, Paul says the Old Testament saint, Abraham, was saved by his faith in God's promises, not by his works

‘What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”’

Romans 4: 1-3

- Paul goes on to describe how David celebrates the same truth (quoting from Psalm 32: 1-2)

‘just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”’

Romans 4: 6-8

- Faith has always been the means of salvation for all humanity, but faith always has an object
 - We place our faith in something – yet God did not reveal to humanity that Yeshua was our Messiah (our "something") until a certain point in history
 - So prior to that point, what did the Old Testament saints believe in?
- The object of the Old Testament saint's faith was always the same: the promises of God (which included forgiveness and restoration)
 - The Old Testament saints believed in the promises of God concerning His coming provision for sin, even though the means of this had not been revealed completely
 - The content of God's promises was revealed in varying degrees over time, but the object of His promise (i.e., a provision for sin) remained unchanged
- **God's Supreme Revelation**
 - It was through His Son, Yeshua, that God has revealed the means of forgiveness and restoration in holiness
 - It is only through Yeshua's death and resurrection that the means of grace is revealed for all saints, both Old Testament saints and the saints of the Church

‘God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.’

Hebrews 1: 1-4

What is Meant by ‘God's Grace’?

- **Grace – God's Favour Towards the Unworthy**
 - Grace is unmerited favour – freely given to humanity – it is not a reward for obedience or moral achievements, rather it originates in divine love, reaching out to restore a relationship between people and their Creator

- In Scripture, Grace embodies God’s readiness to forgive, uphold, and transform, despite human shortcomings
 - In Christian terms, Grace can be defined as “God’s favour toward the unworthy” or “God’s benevolence on the undeserving”
 - Grace is getting what you don’t deserve
 - It is the opposite of ‘karma’ which is all about getting what you deserve
 - In His Grace, God is willing to forgive us and bless us, even though we fall short of living righteously
 - The Law reveals to us our shortcomings when we fail to be obedient to God’s commands – true for people under both OT and NT
 - It is because God is gracious that we, through repentance and a relationship of faith, have His forgiveness and renewal – again, true for people under both OT and NT
 - Grace is not about us – Grace is a word about God: His initiative and His encompassing, extravagant demonstrations of care and favour
- We are All Saved by Grace Through Faith
 - Many people falsely assume that only New Testament believers are saved by grace whereas Old Testament believers were saved by their obedience to the Law of Moses and not by grace
 - The truth is that both the Old and New Testaments clearly teach that everyone who is saved, throughout all history, is saved the same way: by grace, through faith, on account of Christ alone (see *Ephesians 2: 1-10*)
 - Christians live every day by the grace of God – we receive forgiveness according to the riches of God’s grace, and grace drives our sanctification
 - Grace, The Law and the Promises of God
 - Scripture tells us that the role of ‘the Law’ (and the Prophets) was to be our teacher
 - The Purposes of ‘the Law and Prophets’ are to lead us into relationship with God
 - In Relationship we Learn Obedience to God’s Law – but it is not the Law through which we are redeemed unto God
 - It is – and always has been – by Grace through Faith – and this through the redeeming work of Yeshua, God’s Son
 - Paul expresses this very clearly in his letter to the Galatians

‘Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 3: 21-25

- Obedience to God’s commandments is not opposed to faith, but flows from it – in relationship with God we are urged on towards holiness
- The Law was given to lead us to relationship with God and with Yeshua

- This places Torah and teachings of the Law and the Prophets not as a means of justification, but as part of the life of discipleship, written on the heart – as promised in the prophets; justification is found through faith in Yeshua
- We are no longer under Law but under Grace (*Romans 6: 14*)

GRACE – God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense

• How Do We Define God’s Grace?

- The attributes of God are characterised by the “riches of His grace.”
- This Amazing Grace led The Father to give to mankind, His only Son to be our saviour – and for Him to shed His blood as the price of our redemption and restoration into relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit

‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.’
2 Corinthians 8: 9

• GRACE – The Focus is on Redemption through Yeshua

- **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense** – a very helpful acronym to teach us of Grace
- **GOD’S** – Grace is a word about God: his un-coerced initiative and pervasive, extravagant demonstrations of care and favour
- **RICHES** – Grace gives us Access to the Richness of New Life in Him
 - **Salvation:** Grace is often associated with God's act of providing salvation to humanity – it is not earned by human effort but is a gift from God through His grace (*see Ephesians 2: 8-9*)
 - **Forgiveness:** Grace is also closely tied to the forgiveness of sins – grace is seen in God's willingness to forgive and cleanse individuals of their sins when they repent and turn to Him (*see 1 John 1: 9*)
 - **Empowerment:** Grace provides the strength and empowerment to live a righteous and Godly life – this concept is sometimes referred to as "sufficient grace" (*see 2 Corinthians 12: 9*)
 - **God's Love and Compassion:** Grace demonstrates God's love, mercy, and compassion toward humanity – showing His willingness to reach out to people despite their imperfections and failures (*see Lamentations 2: 22-23*)
 - **Relationship:** Grace is the means by which believers have access to God and are able to have a personal relationship with Him (*see Hebrews 4: 16*)
- **AT** – Grace is Centred in the Redemptive Work of Yeshua
- **CHRIST’S** – Grace is Focussed in the Person and Work of our Saviour – Jesus Christ our Messiah

‘And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’
John 1: 16-17

- **EXPENSE** – Grace is Revealed in the Sacrificial Death of Yeshua
 - He laid aside His Divine Majesty and was born as a Finite Human Being
 - He was Crucified as a Criminal, amongst robbers, though He knew no sin Himself (*Mark 15: 27-28*) – as prophesied by Isaiah (*Isaiah 53: 12*)

- He laid down His Life and was Raised from the Dead that we might have Eternal Life – it was His Redemptive Mission at His Fathers Command

*“Therefore My Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life that I may take it again.** No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. **I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.** This command I have received from My Father.”*
John 10: 17-18

Grace – Obtained By Faith

See Ephesians 2: 1-10

● Our Natural Condition

- Paul writes his letter to the church in Ephesus while he’s under house arrest in Rome
- In Ephesians Ch. 2 Paul begins with reminding the disciples in Ephesus of their spiritual condition before God’s Grace was revealed in Yeshua’s saving work

*‘And **you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,** in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience among whom also **we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**’*
Ephesians 2: 1-3

● God’s Intervention by Grace

- Fortunately, God didn’t leave humanity in that condition
- Paul next declares how God intervenes – He, being rich in mercy and great in love, made the Ephesian believers alive together with Christ (*Ephesians 2: 5*)
- This new life from the dead happens not based on anything the Ephesians, or we, could have done – but only due to God’s Grace (His unmerited favour)
- We are lifted up, out of the sinful mire of our natural lives, into heavenly places (with Christ) – we are made alive spiritually by God (*Ephesians 2: 6*)
- God’s Grace is effective for all time (*Ephesians 2: 7*)
 - Effective for the Old Testament Saints because the Law looks forward to Yeshua the means of salvation and renewal
 - Effective for us, New Testament Saints, who see God’s grace in the death of Yeshua at Calvary two millennia ago
 - Effective for the future day – the ages to come – when we shall be raised up to be with Yeshua, our Lord and Saviour forever

● Saved by God’s Grace

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

- We obtain salvation through God’s Grace Towards Us!
- We obtain salvation by Faith – faith (believing trust) in what God has done through His Son Yeshua (*Ephesians 2: 8*)

- We obtain salvation as a Gift, from God to Us
- It is not of Works – such as Law Keeping
 - The Law guides us as to how we should live in relationship with God
 - Nothing we could do could earn us salvation – It Is A Gift
 - It is God’s Gift of Grace – He calls us into Relationship with Him
 - All we do is Accept the Gift
 - It is obtained by Faith (Believing Trust) in Yeshua’s death for our sins (when death would have been God’s rightful judgement on our sin)

Living and Sharing God’s Grace

‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’

Ephesians 2: 10

- God made us – human beings were designed by God to be in His image
 - We are (re)created in Yeshua – born again to a new spiritual life lost ages ago in the Garden of Eden
- Now we have Work to do – good works – for the Lord
 - He has prepared works for us to do
 - He puts the Holy Spirit (God’s Indwelling Presence) in us, to be our teacher
 - A New Tutor – not the Law – but the Holy Spirit to guide us
 - The Law is still important – through obedience to Law we are led into deeper relationship with God
 - The Holy Spirit enables us to walk in the good works God has prepared for us
- A New Relationship
 - Just as the Law was to lead us to relationship with God through Yeshua - so now the Holy Spirit is the enabler – helping us to hear Gods word and guiding us
 - The Spirit leads us in our relationship with Yeshua; opening to us new spiritual understanding, including scripture; filling us with all the Fruits of the Spirit
- A New Commission

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Amen.

Matthew 28: 19-20

‘For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.’

Titus 2: 11-14