

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Grace & Law

F. B. Hole

There are two verses which shed such light upon this subject that we must quote them at once.

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

“Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

The first of these shows us the great dispensational change which took place at the coming of Christ. The second, the result of that change so far as the believer is concerned. Under the new regime he obtains freedom from the slavery of sin.

In one respect law and grace are alike. Both set before us a very exalted standard – though even in this the latter excels. In all other respects they are exact opposites.

At Mount Sinai the law of Moses was given (Ex. 19, 20). God – but very little known, because still hidden in thick darkness – then laid down explicitly His righteous and holy demands. If men obeyed they were blessed: if they disobeyed they came under the law’s solemn curse (Gal. 3:10). As a matter of fact the law was broken and the curse merited before there was time for the tables of stone to reach the people (Ex. 32). The succeeding chapter tells us how God dealt in mercy with them. Under law not tempered by mercy they must have instantly perished.

Grace, on the other hand, means that God having fully revealed Himself to us in His Son, all His righteous and holy demands have been met in Christ death and resurrection, so that blessing is available for all. To all who believe forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit are granted, so that there may be power to conform them to the standard – which under grace is nothing short of Christ Himself.

The very essence of law, then, is demand, that of grace is supply.

Under law God, so to speak, stands before us saying, “Give! render to Me your love and dutiful obedience.” Under grace He stands with full hand outstretched, saying, “Take! receive of My love and saving power.”

Law says, “Do and live,” grace says, “Live and do.”

Now we believers, as we have seen, are not under law, but under grace. Let us see how that has come to pass. Galatians

4:4, 5 will tell us: “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

That which has made the change is in one word, redemption. But that involved the death of the Redeemer. He must needs be made a curse for us by dying on the tree, (Gal. 3:13). Hence it is that the believer is entitled to regard himself as “dead to the law” (Rom. 7:4). He died in the death of his Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. The law did not die; on the contrary, never was its majesty so upheld as when Jesus died beneath its curse. Two things, however, did happen. First, the law being magnified and its curse borne, God suspends His wrath, and proclaims grace to all mankind. Second, the believer died to the law in the Person of his great Representative. He is, to use the Scripture language, “married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead” (Rom. 7:4), i.e., He is now controlled by another Power, and that power is in a Person – the risen Son of God.

Connected with these two things are two great facts.

First, the law is not the ground of a sinner’s justification. He is justified by grace, by the blood of Christ, by faith. This is fully reasoned out in Romans 3 and 4. Second, the law is not the rule of life for the believer. Christ is that. Our links are with Him and not with law, as we have seen (Rom. 7:4). This is fully shown in Galatians 3 and 4.

The Galatian Christians had started well, converted under the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God by the Apostle. Then came along the Judaizing mischief-makers, who were “zealous of the law,” and taught circumcision and law-keeping. Into this snare the Galatians fell.

Paul’s answer is virtually this, that the law was a provisional arrangement (Gal. 3:17), brought in to show up Israel’s transgressions (v. 19), and acting as a schoolmaster “up to Christ” (v. 24), as it should read. Christ being come, redemption having been accomplished, and the Spirit having been given, the believer leaves the position of a child under age, or that of a servant, and becomes a son in the Divine household, being thus put in the liberty of grace (Gal. 4:1-7).

Inasmuch as the grace platform on to which we have been lifted is much higher than the law platform which we have left, to go back even in mind from the one to the other is to fall. “Ye are fallen from grace” is the apostle’s word to such as do this.

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The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the point. His highest thought did not rise above law, when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." He was received, however, in pure grace, and the son's place inside was given. Suppose, however, that a few days after, under the plea of wishing to retain his father's affection and the place and privileges so freely bestowed, he had commenced working as a household drudge and rigidly conforming himself to the laws which governed the servants, what then? He would have "fallen from grace," and sadly grieved the heart of his father, since it would have been equivalent to a vote of "no confidence" in him.

How important, then, for us to have the heart "established with grace" (Heb. 13:9).

What do you say to the idea that grace came in to help us to keep the law, so that we might go to heaven that way

Simply this - that it is totally opposed to Scripture. In the first place, the idea that keeping the law entitles a person to heaven is a fallacy. When the lawyer asked the Lord, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he was referred to the law, and upon giving a correct summary of its demands, Jesus answered, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25-28). There is not a word about going to heaven. Life upon earth is the reward of law-keeping.

Then, secondly, grace came not to help us keep the law, but to bring us salvation from its curse by another bearing it for us. Galatians 3 plainly shows this.

If, however, further confirmation be required, read Romans 3, and notice that when law has convicted and closed man's mouth (vv. 9-19), grace through righteousness justifies "without the law" (vv. 20-24).

Read also 1 Timothy 1. Law is made to convict the ungodly (vv. 9, 10). The Gospel of grace presents Christ Jesus who "came into the world to save sinners" (v. 15.). Not, be it noted, to help sinners to keep the law, and so attempt to save themselves.

If the law was not given for us to keep and so be justified what was it given for?

Let Scripture itself answer:- -

"What things soever the law saith, it saith. . . that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19), "The law entered, that the offence might abound" (Rom. 5:20).

"Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19).

The law has, like every other institution of God, signally achieved its purpose. It can convict and silence the most obstinately self-conceited religionist. Grace alone can save him.

Then has grace set aside the law and annulled it for ever?

Grace, personified in Jesus, has borne the curse of the broken law, thereby redeeming all who believe from its curse (Gal. 3:13).

Further, it has redeemed us from under the law itself, and placed all our relationships with God on a new footing (Gal. 4:4-6).

Now if the believer is no longer under law, but under grace, we must not suppose that the law itself is either annulled or set aside. Its majesty was never more clearly upheld than when the righteous One suffered as a Substitute under its curse, and multitudes will quail before its impeachment at the day of judgment (Rom. 2:12).

What harm is there in a Christian adopting the law as a rule of life?

A great deal. By so doing he "falls from grace," for grace teaches as well as saves (Titus 2:11-14).

He also lowers the Divine standard. Not law but Christ is the standard for the believer.

He further gets hold of the wrong motive power. Fear may impel a person to attempt, though unsuccessfully, to keep the law, and regulate the power of the "flesh" within. The Spirit of God is the power that does control the flesh and conform to Christ (Gal. 5:16-18).

Lastly, he does violence to the relationships in which he stands by the grace of God. Though a son in the liberty of the Father's house and heart, he insists on putting himself under the code of rules drawn up for the regulation of the servants' hall!

Is there no harm in all this? We venture to say there is.

If you teach that the Christian is not under the law, may it not lead to all kinds of wickedness?

It would, IF a person became a Christian without the new birth, or repentance, without coming under the influence of grace and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Since, however, no one is a Christian without these things, the case wears a different aspect, and to reason in the way suggested only betrays deplorable ignorance of the truth of the Gospel.

The argument simply comes to this: that the only way to make Christians live holy lives is to keep them under the threat of the law, as if they had only a kind of sow-nature, and the only way to keep them out of the mire is to drive them back with sticks. The truth is that though the flesh is still within the believer, he has also the new nature, and it is with that that God identifies him. He has the Spirit of Christ to lead him, and hence he may be safely put under grace; for after all it is grace that subdues.

If people quarrel with this, their quarrel is with the Scripture quoted at first.

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

Unconverted men may attempt to use grace as a cloak for wickedness, but that is no reason for denying the truth stated in that verse. What truth is there which has not been abused by evil men?

Does Scripture indicate how grace keeps the believer in order, so that he may please God?

It does. Titus 2:11-15 supplies the answer. In Christianity grace not only saves but teaches, and what an effective teacher it is! It does not fill our heads with cold rules or regulations, but brings our hearts under the subduing influence of the love of God. We learn what is pleasing to Him as set forth in Jesus, and having the Spirit we begin to live the sober, righteous, and godly life.

There is a very great difference between a family of children kept in order by fear of the birch upon misbehavior and those who live in a home where love rules. Order may reign in the former, but it will end in a big explosion ere the children come to years. In the latter there is not only obedience, but a joyful response to the parents' desires, the fruit of responsive affection.

God rules His children on the love principle, and not on the birch-rod principle.

May we live our lives in the happy consciousness of this! *

The Media: Judge, Jury, And Executioner

Keith Keyser

Lately the news cycle has fixated on sexual scandals concerning politicians, business tycoons, and other male celebrities. It is ironic that the current wave of stories began with revelations concerning an entertainment mogul. Given Hollywood's film output, which glorifies fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and other forms of iniquity described by Scripture, it is surprising to see the backlash against a purveyor of this trash for merely living like the movies that he helped bring to the public. Admittedly, many of those implicated in this behavior have abused positions of power to coerce subordinates into unwanted activities. Yet the media outrage is tinged with hypocrisy: they deny God and His word and still expect a moral society! What is more, they rush to judgment and offer no mercy leading to repentance and forgiveness. The Bible shows a much better way, which upholds judgment, yet shows mercy by offering pardon to those who seek it.

Consistent righteousness flows from the Holy Spirit's work in hearts. The fact that humans have a sense of right and wrong stems from the conscience that the Creator built into them (Rom. 2.) For those who receive Christ as Lord and Savior, the Spirit also indwells them, empowering them

to produce the fruit of righteousness in their lives (Phil. 1:11 and Gal. 5:22-25.) Even so, practical sanctification is not instantaneous; rather it is a life-long process that is only completed at the redemption of the body (Rom. 6-8; 1 John 3:1-3.) Sadly, sometimes believers fall into sin – sometimes even gross moral transgressions like those that fill the headlines. Thankfully, the Lord corrects His children – sometimes with painful discipline – yet always with mercy. He seeks not to destroy them, but rather to bring to repentance and confession, which lead to restoration of fellowship. Since salvation rests in the Lord's person and work, a true saint's eternal status is not jeopardized (John 6:37.)

The Righteous Basis Of Mercy

God is light, unalloyed with moral darkness (1 John 1:5); therefore, a relationship with Him must rest on a righteous basis. Before knowing the Son of God, we hide from the light, sensing that we are sinners. As the Scriptures say: "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:20-21.) The Bible unpacks this further in these words: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7.) God's mercy neither flows from ignorance of evil, nor does it condone immorality. Instead, He extends pardon based on Christ's sacrificial death as a propitiation for sin (1 John 1:7-2:2; Rom. 3:21-26.) The righteous judge of the universe is not an accomplice to wickedness, before or after the fact. His salvation resides in Christ, the Lamb of God who died for our sins on the cross (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4), and arose to demonstrate the completeness of His redemptive work (Rom. 4:25.) *

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Truths To Live By

William MacDonald

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” (Mal. 3:16)

It is possible to be so busy that our souls become barren. Too much activity causes us to be occupied too much with our work and too little with our God. Preachers who do not spend much time alone in meditation and communion with the Lord soon give out second-hand messages that have little or no spiritual power. We should all pray, “Lord, deliver me from the barrenness of a busy life.” Many believers are afraid to be alone. They must be with others, talking, working or traveling. No time is spent in quiet contemplation. The pressures of modern life encourage us to be hyperactive, to be overachievers. We build up a momentum of activity and it is difficult to slow down. Life seems to be a continual push, push, push, go, go, go. The result is that we do not develop deep spiritual roots. We still spout the same pious truisms that we shared with people twenty years ago. No progress in twenty years!

And yet there are those who discipline themselves to break away from the rat race, who refuse invitations, who put aside secondary activities so that they can spend time alone with the Lord. They resolutely make time for prayerful meditation. They have a hideaway where they can tune out the noise of the world in order to be alone with the Lord Jesus.

These people have an inside track with the Lord. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and he will

show them his covenant.” (Psa. 25:14). God reveals secrets to them that we, in our frenzied lives, know nothing about. There is a communication of divine intelligence concerning guidance, concerning events transpiring in the spiritual realm, concerning the future. Those who dwell in the sanctuary often have visions of God that those who live in the suburbs know nothing about. It was the one who leaned on the Savior’s bosom who was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

I often think of these words of Cecil: “I say everywhere and to all, you must hold intercourse with God or your soul will die. You must walk with God or Satan will walk with you. You must grow in grace or you will lose it; and you cannot do this but by appropriating to this object a due portion of your time, and diligently employing suitable means. I know not how it is that some Christians can make so little of recollection and retirement. I find the spirit of the age a strong assimilating principle. I find it hurrying my mind away in its vortex, and sinking me among the dregs and filth of a carnal nature...I am obliged to withdraw myself regularly and to say to my heart, ‘What are you doing? Where are you now?’” *

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