

LAW VERSUS GRACE (13)

Fact #3 - The law was given to Israel to show Israel her transgressions and to point her to Jesus Christ. **Gal. 3:19-25**

Fact #4 - The law lasted approximately 1500 years, from Mount Sinai to the death of Christ. **John 1:17; Gal. 2:19-21; Col. 2:14**

Jesus Christ has nailed the law to the cross for the believer; however, the unbeliever may still be condemned by it.

Fact #5 - The law teachings are found in the Old Testament and in the Synoptic Gospels (**Matthew, Mark, Luke**), particularly before the death of Jesus Christ.

Fact #6 - Even under the O.T. law, there was grace. **Ex. 20:24; Lev. 5:17-18; 17:11**

The law was a system of God designed for a specific time to accomplish a specific purpose for a specific people. Overlooking this critical information can cause a believer to miss a life of freedom in Jesus Christ and can place a person under a terrible theological bondage.

QUESTION #8 – What is Grace?

Trying to specifically define the grace of God is nearly impossible, since it is a feeble attempt to understand something that is completely inexhaustible.

However, having said that, grace is a subject that every N.T. believer should attempt to know as much as possible. **What we must clearly understand is that it is theologically impossible to mingle law with grace.** These are two totally distinct and different systems of Divine government and this point is clearly stated in Scripture (**Rom. 10:4; 11:6; Gal. 5:2-5, 18; Eph. 2:8-9**).

Just as we have observed key facts pertaining to the O.T. law, so also we want to observe three key facts pertaining to grace:

Fact #1 - The basic meaning of the word “grace” (*χάρις*) is lovely and gracious kindness and favor (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 479).

When we relate these words to God and His connection to man, it is a gracious kindness and favor which God demonstrates to man that is totally and completely undeserved. What we will also see is that God’s grace is something that cannot be earned, nor is it something that can ever be repaid.

Fact #2 - Grace was evidenced in the Old Testament.

Although the unearned and undeserved kindness and favor of God were operative even in Eden, **it was not until after the death of Jesus Christ that “grace,” as a complete Divine governmental system became operative.**

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We may clearly establish this Biblically in the following three ways:

- 1) We know that Jesus Christ brought a new government system called grace, which was the antithesis of the O.T. Mosaic law—**John 1:16-17**.
- 2) We know that the moment Jesus Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top down, indicating a new Divine government program was now operative—**Matt. 27:50-51; Mark 15:37-38; Luke 23:45**.
- 3) We know that the Apostle Paul specifically refers to a new dispensation or stewardship known as grace—**Eph. 3:2**.

Fact #3 - New Testament grace is totally different than O.T. law.

N.T. grace is the antithesis of law. Totally opposite of grace:

- 1) Under law the order of life is do and live.
Under grace the order of life is live and do.
- 2) Under law God says if you do good I will bless you.
Under grace God says I have blessed you, now do good. **Eph. 1:3**
- 3) The basis for the law is human works.
The basis for grace is Divine work.
- 4) Under law human obligation precedes Divine blessing.
Under grace Divine blessing precedes human obligation.
- 5) Under law blessing is withheld because of failure.
Under grace blessing is given in spite of failure. **Rom. 7:15**
- 6) Under law certain sins demanded death. **Lev. 18:22, 24-25**
Under grace all sin can be forgiven. **I Cor. 6:9-11**
- 7) Under law you get what you deserve.
Under grace you do not get what you deserve.

M. R. DeHaan lists 19 differences between the law system and the grace system;

1. The law prohibits us from coming to God; grace invites us to come as we are.
2. The law condemns the sinner; grace redeems the sinner.
3. The law says, “do this and live”; grace says, “it is done” now live.
4. The law says, “try”; grace says “it is finished.”
5. The law curses the sinner; grace blesses the believer.
6. The law slays the sinner; grace saves the sinner.
7. The law shuts every mouth before God; grace opens the mouth in praise to God.
8. The law condemns the best man; grace saves the worst man.

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9. The law says, “pay up what you owe”; grace says “it is all paid.”
10. The law says, “the wages of sin is death” grace says “the gift of God is eternal life.”
11. The law says, “the soul that sinneth it shall die”; grace says, “believe and live.”
12. The law reveals man’s sin; grace atones for man’s sin.
13. By the law is the knowledge of sin; grace provides redemption from sin.
14. The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
15. The law demands obedience; grace gives power to obey.
16. The law was written on stone; grace is written in the heart.
17. The law was done away in Christ; grace abides forever.
18. The law puts us under bondage; grace sets the soul at liberty.
19. The law genders fear; grace brings peace and confidence.

(M. R. DeHaan, *Law or Grace*, pp. 79-80)

It is evident that even though grace was operative during the O.T. economy, there are clear distinctions and differences between the two systems, which cannot ever be mingled together or else Christ died in vain (**Gal. 2:21**).

Before we attempt to give a definition of grace, we must make at least five observations about the character of grace. The grace to which we are referring is the grace that saved us, which is the same grace in which we are to live after we are saved. So it is imperative that we grasp as much as we can about this crucial subject:

Grace Character Observation #1 - Grace has nothing to do with works.

Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:24; Rom. 11:5-6

If human works are involved in any fashion, it is not and cannot be grace. The grace of God has absolutely no connection to what a person has or has not done. In grace, human works are a non-factor. Human works are not at all in the picture. Under law, works are a very important factor, but not under grace (**Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16**).

A gift that is based on works is not a gift; it is an earned paycheck. If it is based on achievement, it is not a gift; it is a reward. Grace is neither a paycheck nor a reward. It has nothing to do with works in any way.

Grace Character Observation #2 - Grace has nothing to do with debt. **Rom. 4:4-5**

The grace of God system is not a debt system. It is always presented as a complete gift system (**John 10:28; Rom. 6:23**).

Grace Character Observation #3 - Grace has nothing to do with what is deserved.

Rom. 3:19-24

When we read a Davidic psalm such as **Psalms 51:1-5**, it becomes very clear that King David truly grasped this key point. There is no doubt that all deserve the wrath of God and therefore we must conclude that God’s grace has nothing to do with what is or is not deserved.

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It is important to observe that no legal work can have anything to do with a grace system. The moment a person says, "If you do this, then I will do this," it becomes a works system. The O.T. law was a very legal system of works. God told Israel that if she would obey, He would give her the Promised Land (**Deut. 29:9-21**). If she didn't obey, He would send great punishment. This is a legal system, a works system which is entirely distinct from a pure system of grace.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer accurately observed: "An act ceases to be gracious, therefore, when it is a recognition of merit, or the payment of a just debt... Grace is neither treating a person as he deserves, nor treating a person better than he deserves. It is treating a person without the slightest reference to his deserts" (*Grace*, pp. 10-11).

Since every human being is a sinner by nature (**Ps. 51:5**), by practice (**Rom. 3:23**) and by Divine decree (**Rom. 5:12-17**), and since the law was designed to continually demonstrate this reality (**Rom. 5:20**), we must conclude that grace has absolutely no connection to law or to what is deserved. These are two distinct systems.

The grace system is one that totally emphasizes the kindness and favor of God toward sinful, finite man without any consideration of works or merit. It is a system that does not focus its attention on the works of men for God, but on the work of God for men. For a believer to place him or herself under the O.T. law restrictions is to place himself in bondage to a system that in this Grace Age is repulsive to God.

It is true that a life of righteousness, due to the constraining law of Christ, is an expectation under the Divine governmental system known as grace; however, it is also true that this righteousness has nothing whatsoever to do with the O.T. law. When a careful study of the N.T. has been completed, it will be observed that grace has its own distinct system of operation.

Grace Character Observation #4 - Grace, as a dispensation, began at the death of Christ.
Col. 2:13-14; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 1:7, 10; 3:2, 9

Even though the dispensation of grace actually began at the death of Christ, it took a while for some disciples to figure this out. In fact, in the case of Peter, God had to do something dramatic to teach him this very truth (**Acts 10:5-16**).

Grace Character Observation #5 - Grace, as a dispensation, will end at the Rapture of the Church. **Acts 15:6-17; I Thess. 4:13-18**

Having made these observations, we define grace this way: **Grace is the Divine Governmental system of God, which began at the death of Jesus Christ and will end at the Rapture of the Church, which is totally focused on the unearned and undeserved kindness and favor of God toward sinners in providing salvation and in sustaining salvation for those totally unworthy and undeserving of it.**