

LAW VERSUS GRACE (16)

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.**

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Under grace, this same focus is that which motivates one to live a righteous, godly, holy life. The grace system is complete in itself and is totally separate and distinct from the law system or the Kingdom system.

QUESTION #9 – Where do we find the teachings of the grace system?

As a general observation, we may say that just as we find the teachings of the law in the Old Testament, so we find the teachings of grace in the New Testament.

However, careful examination of the New Testament reveals to us that true development of the grace doctrine and grace system was largely the work of the Apostle Paul. As Dr. Ryrie said, “everything prior prepares for it (*grace*), and all things are affected by it” (*The Grace of God*, p. 27). This point may be easily proved by examining the subject of grace as it relates to the New Testament. We may analyze the New Testament by subdividing it into five categories:

(Category #1) - Grace in the Gospels.

The word “grace” (χάρις) is only used in the Gospels 11 times. The word is not used in Matthew or Mark and is used eight times by Luke (1:30, 2:40, 52; 4:22; 6:32-34; 17:9) and three times by John (1:14, 16, 17). This is no small theological matter to observe, **for the doctrine of grace as a dispensational system of Divine government will not be found in the Gospels.**

Proponents of Lordship Salvation who use the Gospels such as Matthew and Mark to form their concept of the doctrine of the Gospel, are barking up the wrong tree. The grace system and the grace Gospel is not developed in those books.

Of the 11 uses, Luke only uses the word a couple of times with the idea of undeserved favor (Luke 1:28; 7:42-43). **The only place in the Gospels where grace, as a Divine system of government is used, is John 1:14, 16-17.**

(Category #2) - Grace in Acts.

Acts is a book that becomes a bridge between law and grace. But it becomes very clear as the book develops that the primary message that needed to be brought to men was now grace, not law (Acts 15:11; 18:27). In Acts the idea of grace began to stretch out to a message that was to be taken to the Gentiles. As we have already observed, the critical decision made at the Jerusalem council no longer was the Law of Moses the Divine system of government, but it was now grace (Acts 15:5-11). At this critical meeting the apostles voted for a new system called grace.

(Category #3) - Grace in Paul's Epistles.

Dr. Charles Ryrie said, “The most important stage in the development of the New Testament doctrine of grace is the writing of the Pauline Epistles” (*The Grace of God*, p. 31).

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For the Apostle Paul, everything in one's relationship to God was clearly based on grace and not law. Paul preached grace, wrote grace and defended grace. He also opposed law and saw the two systems as contrary to each other (i.e. **Gal. 2:16**). The dominant theme of his message was grace. His epistles are filled with it. Very often he will open and close a letter with this theme (**I Cor. 1:3/16:23; II Cor. 1:2/13:14; Gal. 1:3/6:18; Eph. 1:2/6:24; Philip. 1:2/4:23; Col. 1:2/4:18; I Thess. 1:1/5:28; II Thess. 1:2/3:18; I Tim. 1:2/6:21; II Tim. 1:2/4:22; Titus 1:4/3:15; Phil. 1:3/25**).

In tracking his grace theme throughout his epistles, it is clear that he saw God's grace in providing salvation (**II Cor. 6:1**), electing people to salvation (**Eph. 1:2, 4; I Thess. 1:1, 4**), developing His people (**II Cor. 4:15**), directing His people (**Gal. 1:15**), protecting His people, caring for His people (**II Cor. 1:8-11**), giving grace gifts (*the word "gift" is a form of the word grace*) to His people (**I Cor. 12:4, 9, 18, 30, 31**) and using His people (**I Cor. 3:10; 15:10; II Cor. 4:15**) even when they are hurting (**II Thess. 1:12; II Cor. 12:9**). He believed that all spirituality was found by trusting in God's grace, not ourselves or our works (**II Cor. 1:12**). When he spoke of giving money to the Lord's work, he talked about that as being part of the grace of God system (**II Cor. 8:1, 4, 6-9, 19; 9:8-9**).

However, when one comes to Galatians and Romans, Paul clearly and theologically shows the sharp contrasts between law and grace (**Gal. 2:21**). To preach a righteousness on the basis of anything but grace is to tamper with the cross-work of Jesus Christ and to actually preach another gospel (**Gal. 1:6-7**). This is not just a slight difference of theological opinion; to combine O.T. law into N.T. grace is a perversion of grace that severs you from the grace system (**Gal. 5:4**).

In Romans, Paul specifically says we stand in grace (**Rom. 5:1-2**). It is a free gift (**3:24; 5:15**). By faith in Jesus Christ, you are justified and you stand in the grace system. Later, Paul clearly shows the believer has been set free from the law (**Rom. 6:14; 7:6**). **In Ephesians, Paul actually refers to a specific dispensation or household stewardship called "God's grace" (Eph. 3:2, 7), which was not known in other time periods (Eph. 3:5).**

Paul is truly the apostle who develops God's truth pertaining to the Grace Age. As Dr. Ryrrie says, "The church owes to the Apostle Paul the preeminence given in the New Testament to the concept of grace" (*The Grace of God*, p. 44).

(Category #4) - Grace in Hebrews.

The book of Hebrews was written as a warning to those who had backslidden in the faith system and were compromising with O.T. Judaism. It is a book that is designed to show the superiority of Jesus Christ and faith in Him. The word "grace" only appears seven times in the book, but it is presented in "regal splendor" (**Heb. 4:16**). The throne of God is said to be a throne of grace. The Christian life is said to be a growth process in grace (**Heb. 12:15**). It is specifically said that we must move away from strange teachings of legalism to be strengthened in grace (**Heb. 13:9**). Spirituality is not by legalistic ritual, but by blossoming in grace. In fact, one of the sharpest contrasts between law and grace shows up in the book of Hebrews (**Heb. 12:18-24**).