

# **LAW AND GRACE**

## **THE LAW**

For Christians it is a divinely laid out list of rules by which to live in order to benefit us.

ABRAHAM, MOSES, DAVID and the PROPHETS over a long period of time were instrumental in this.

It covers PERSONAL, CIVIL, MORAL, SOCIAL, CEREMONIAL, LAND and even ANIMAL issues.

As a result, there are hundreds of rules related to these. Many people found it extremely difficult and stumbled over it's basic demands.

It all became an UNBEARABLE WEIGHT for them and for those who tried, life could become a DAILY GRIND.

The PHARISEES, LAWYERS, SADDUCEES and SCRIBES, etc., all gave it a lot of effort. BUT in that process many lost it's main purpose. In the end, it seemed to become a RELIGION in itself. It became a measure of how 'GOOD' you were which resulted in PRIDE producing BOASTING by some - even COMPETITION!

Many people were never, ever sure if they were GOOD ENOUGH in pleasing GOD so as to QUALIFY for Heaven. Especially when the Bible tells us in GEN 8:28 that 'the inclination of the thoughts of our hearts are EVIL all the time'.

Nothing can MASK the face of God more effectively than a religion aimed at STRICT LAW-KEEPING AND RITUAL.

The LAW was intended to help people NOT TO SIN and to act as a MIRROR which shows that we are all DIRTY before GOD.

Because GOD'S being and essence is PURE, HOLY and without SIN whatsoever, nothing dirty or unclean (such as our fallen nature is) can ever mix with or be in the PRESENCE of such a person - the two are IRRECONCILEABLE. Without doubt, none of us - NOT ONE - can measure up to, despite all GOOD WORKS done, a purity such as this.

Is: 64:5-6 - states that 'ALL our RIGHTEOUS ACTS are FILTHY RAGS in His sight' when it comes to achieving this. ALL SIN is HIDEOUS AND FOUL in God's eyes so

that there must be a new recognition of the absolute SINFULNESS OF SIN, so that there is this BARRIER between us and God.

Today the LAW must be used in order to MEASURE US in order to show us this, and to come to REPENTANCE. Yet today we tend to use EUPHEMISMS to describe SIN - e.g., poor decisions due to inadequate information, faults, mistakes, errors, lack of regard for others, selfishness, our 'up-bringing', etc. We even classify SIN into MAJOR and MINOR TYPES, sometimes named VENAL or MORTAL SINS.

However, Jesus tells us that if we break just ONE, you break them all! Thus being subject to judgement!

What on earth could be the SOLUTION to this seemingly UNBRIDGEABLE GULF between GOD and MAN - the people He created to be His children and His heavenly companions?

The answer, of course, originated in Heaven and became MANIFEST on earth. It came because of

GOD's very nature - HIS LOVE for us all - LOST SINNERS. It was evidence of a 'LOVE SUPREME' but for some, difficult to grasp and understand.

In order to summarise this SOLUTION the Bible uses the Word 'GRACE' - this word appears 109 times in the New Testament. What does the word mean?

It is UNDESERVED FORGIVENESS, UNMERITED FAVOUR, FREE MERCY, BEING GIVEN CLEMENCY from a penal sentence by GOD to all deserving severe punishment.

In our case mercy to prevent ETERNAL SEPARATION from Him, which we and the Bible describe as HELL!

So how was this achieved? There are 3 parts to it.

1) GOD Himself became INCARNATE as JESUS!

Born on earth in the usual way (although the Conception was Miraculous!) and then experiencing all the emotions, feelings and temptations of human existence as a boy and a man. YET at the same time being GOD HIMSELF.

This is why Matthew, in his gospel, when describing

His birth (1:22-23) says 'They will call Him IMMANUEL - 'God with us' ' as prophesied in the Old Testament (Is. 7:21).

During His ministry, Jesus Himself was WORSHIPPED, (John 9:38 & John 28:9), He made Himself EQUAL WITH GOD (John 5:18) and referred to Himself as 'I AM' which is the memorial name of God (Ex.3:13-15) and by which He wanted Himself always to be remembered.

2) As a result of Him purposefully suffering on the CROSS and predicting He would do so Himself, His BLOOD WAS SHED as a holy and pure sacrifice planned by GOD to provide a complete, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

This is because He Himself was PURE and SINLESS - fathered only by GOD the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin whose own sinful state could not interfere with His purity (confirmed biologically, regarding the passing of blood).

This one Act RECONCILES people to GOD in a perfect

way - by faith - IF THEY BELIEVE IT!

This explains the word 'G R A C E' - God's Riches At Christ's Expense - and fulfills the definition of UNMERITED FAVOUR and negates the need for any additions such as GOOD WORKS.

It is why ACTS 20:27-30 states "GOD'S BLOOD (*alone*) PURCHASED THE CHURCH".

On Judgement Day when we stand before GOD, if you have to rely on your good works to 'play a part' in your SALVATION you will have to BOAST about them. Sooner could a worm aspire to be a brain surgeon than a SINNER (which we all are) expect to work their own passage to Heaven and Glory! Nobody can be, or contribute to being, their OWN SAVIOUR. YET Mohammad Ali still said 'Service to others pays the rent for a room with GOD'!

Gal 2:16 states that by observing the LAW, NO-ONE will be justified. We are NOT SAVED BY good works, we are SAVED TO DO good works. The only way people get to HEAVEN is by ACCEPTING A FREE GIFT and not by EARNING a reward.

Gal 2:20 states "if righteousness could be gained through the LAW, Christ died for NOTHING!" Plus, Paul states in Eph 2:15 "Jesus has ABOLISHED THE LAW, with it's commandments and regulations and has created ONE NEW PERSON out of TWO, now reconciled to GOD."

No other faith offers such a gift so as to solve the problem of human sin. ISLAM, JUDAISM, HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, SIKHISM, MORMONISM, CHRISTADELPHIANISM, ARMSTRONGISM, JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE, etc. etc. are ALL religions of WORKS, laying down rules to keep to. *These religions record MAN's SEARCH FOR GOD - whereas CHRISTIANITY is GOD's SEARCH FOR MAN.*

Even when adherents have had-a-go-at-it all their lives, they are still NEVER SURE if they have done enough to please their god. Unlike the Christian faith in Jesus and what He has done for us, IF we believe, repent and accept His sacrifice alone as being sufficient, we can be 100% SURE.

BUT what now of the LAW? Of what use is it NOW?  
Does it mean we have less need to obey it?

Believing Christians still try to keep the LAW and often fail, but now we have a solution to this - REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS as a result of, again, what JESUS has done on the Cross. To try to keep the LAW now springs from a place of 'redemption' and 'acceptance' and therefore a desire to 'obey' what the new Commandment of JESUS is - to LOVE your fellow man and woman. It no longer springs from DUTY. Paul states in Rom 13:8 - "He who LOVES his fellow man and woman has fulfilled the LAW". (Jesus came to fulfil the law for us - Matt 5:17.) Therefore, we love God for sending JESUS and all the other commandments spring from the 1st and 2nd Commandments.

However, it is still a 'tall order' and we can fail. This is where PART 3 of God's answer to the problem of SIN plays such an important part and we can regularly and sincerely say:

3. REPENTANCE - "We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too



much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and we have done those things which we ought not to have done and there is no health in us.....".

Of course, Jesus knew we needed help in this and that is why He left us with the HOLY SPIRIT Who supplies us with God's many gifts, which include DISCERNMENT, FAITH AND WISDOM. Nevertheless, we can still see this other 'gospel' working in the Churches today. It can be seen with the attempts of people in and out of the Church, trying to COPY JESUS as a good person without the 100% reliance on Him as Saviour. They can be identified quite readily when asked a question like this:

"If, at this very minute, you were to be struck down and killed, how sure are you that you would be with JESUS in Heaven?" You can ask the person to put a percentage figure on their certainty if they are not sure.

I have found only a SMALL MINORITY say they are

100% sure. This question was put to CHURCH GOERS, AND NON-CHURCH GOERS alike! Those who are not sure are obviously basing their 'acceptance into Heaven' on their own achievements, good deeds and service - good works!

### WHAT COULD BE THE REASON FOR THIS?

Here are some suggestions:

1. Some churches greatly emphasise LOVE - of one another, God and of our enemies, following quite rightly JESUS' own Commandment. Often it has not been put into the right context because God's wrath is not mentioned and it is forgotten to confirm and make people realise that if they are NOT SAVED they will have to face this wrath after death.

In fact, many people DO NOT believe there is a 'wrath to come' as the subject matter has been sidelined in some of the churches.

Far more people would be coming to JESUS to be SAVED in order to flee from this wrath, if the full message of the Gospel were preached in a balanced way.

If people are merely needing to be loved, needing peace and a feeling of 'togetherness' then this is a mistaken motive for being in church - if knowing God is not their main desire. Having said that, it is always possible that having come to the church for whatever reason, they may still yet find their need for salvation, if the preaching is with balance and they get to hear the FULL GOSPEL in all it's GLORY.

There must be a CONSCIOUSESS OF SIN, a NEED FOR REPENTANCE (on-going to the end of their life) which brings FORGIVENESS and then ATONEMENT (a complete AT-ONE-NESS with God through JESUS' SACRIFICE).

Then LOVE, of GOD, of ONE ANOTHER and even of YOUR ENEMIES, has a proper and firm basis.

2. Perhaps I have been attending the wrong churches, but I have rarely heard a sermon/message which taught what the Bible teaches about HELL, including the reasons why anyone might end up there!

3. Perhaps it's because the churches today have

found the need to make HAPPINESS rather than RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD it's main concern!

I am sure that there are many more reasons others can put forward. However, Paul sums up the main issues in 1Cor. 15:56-57 and in Rom.3:25:

"The STING OF DEATH is SIN and the POWER OF SIN is the LAW. But thanks be to GOD, Who gives us the VICTORY (over all this) through our LORD AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST Who put to death the LAWS' JUDGEMENT and made us RIGHTEOUS BY HIS BLOOD."

*What could be simpler?*