

The Law Versus Grace Debate

Purpose And Relevance

By Mark E. Benjamin

This is part two of a three part series. You might want to go over the ground work in part one as a reminder of what it is we are trying to accomplish in this series and what assumptions we have made so far.

A lot of Christians make the statement that The Law is in the Old Testament and therefore no longer valid. At this point in our study of Law and Grace (and before Law) we are not going to say if this statement is true or not. For that is one of the main points we want to explore; is The Law something that is relevant to us on this side of the cross or not? We will first explore many facets of Law before we make a blanket statement like this. One of the reasons we want to investigate this before making a conclusion is simply because many – and possibly most – Christians that make this statement have no idea why they say it. They are simply echoing what they heard someone else say, and that person most likely never looked in to it either. So we will explore this to either prove that The Law is not something for Christians or prove it is. Either way, we will then know why we say that this is our belief on the subject. A deeper conviction in what we believe will allow for a more convincing and effective witness when sharing our faith with others. Especially when the one we are sharing it with has a deep conviction in what they believe in, we must not become **a double-minded man, unstable in all he does (James 1:8)**.

Why is it so important to prove this? Because this is one of the main points that must be addressed when witnessing to Jews. If we are unknowing in why we make a statement – no matter what it is – then we lose all credibility and hope of bringing the Jews to Jesus. Plus it is important to make sure we are in the will of God and growing closer to Him. Knowing the whys for our beliefs is an incredible way to do that.

To say that The Law no longer is valid or that it does not apply to us today is to basically say that The Law does not work. This might be correct or this might be incorrect, but we need to approach it with this in mind, that The Law is not needed or that it simply does not work for us today as Christians that are saved by the power of Jesus and the cross. Perhaps at one point in time it did work, but since Jesus, it no longer does. There are three general scenarios explaining how The Law could not work today. We will go through those – with an open mind for the Spirit of God to speak to us – and then at the end see which one of the three is the best likely reason why The Law no longer works.

We also need to first state what it is that works with Grace through Jesus that doesn't work in The Law. The entire point of Grace is that we are sinners and anything with sin can never be with God and enter in to His kingdom. It is through Grace that allows us to now do that. Going back to our definition of Grace from part 1 of this series we saw that Grace was the state of being sanctified, or holy. So it is "being sanctified" that doesn't work with The Law when Christians say The Law does not matter to us anymore. But again, we will not yet determine if this is true or not – for that is why we want to walk through and explore the possibilities before coming to a conclusion.

It Never Worked

First possible scenario that Law doesn't work today is that it just never did work. Since the beginning, Law just never was able to make someone righteous enough to be able to stand before the Lord. So if it never worked, then we could say it doesn't work now. But if we can find just one person that was saved while living sometime after The Law was introduced and before Grace took effect, then that would mean that The Law did indeed work. At least it worked for that one person.

We can find such a person, in fact we can find many such people. One such time is in **Mark 9**. Here we see not just one but two that were saved and with the Lord; and both of them lived during the time that there was only The Law to save them. Both Elijah and Moses are seen with the Lord. If they were not counted as righteous then they would not have been with Jesus and taken back to Heaven – for only **the righteous shall enter (Psalm 118:20)**

So we can see that – while under The Law – salvation did indeed work. At least it worked for Elijah and Moses. These two, who were completely under the Law since Grace had not yet come, were saved. So we cannot say that The Law never worked or that no one was ever saved while under The Law. Grace did not save them because Grace had not yet entered the world, but at least these two were saved.

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Ok, so The Law worked, or at least salvation was possible while under The Law. But that was only two people out of how ever many were on the earth at that time. Although there was way more than just two saved, maybe it worked but just not as well as it should work.

It Didn't Work As It Should Have

To begin to look into if The Law didn't work as it should have we need to first fully realize how important salvation truly is. Not just the importance to us as people, for that should be somewhat obvious. We as people, have sin. There are many verses that talk about this. We cannot deny this fact. **1 John 1:8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.** Now God cannot have anything to do with sin. He is pure and Holy. Only the righteous can be before God. Even when Jesus was on the cross and had the sin of us upon Him, God had to turn away (**Matthew 27:45-46**). One of the reasons why God can't even look upon sin is because He is infinitely Holy. **Psalm 71:19 Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you?** He is so Holy that no one can compare to Him. Therefore, the reason why salvation is so incredibly important to us is because there is no other way for us to ever be with God.

But how important is our salvation to God? Does He truly care whether or not we are saved from eternal death? Read **Jeremiah 7** for the answer to those questions and especially **23 but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you. 24 But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward. 25 From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. 26 But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.** We can see here that God has tried – time and time again – to get us to listen to Him. To follow His ways so that we can be saved. In so much that He even allowed Jesus to take the fall for us. What parent among us would allow our child to be sacrificed for those that do not know them or care to know them... and yet, that is exactly what God did for us.

So our salvation is extremely important to God. In fact, nothing is more important than being with Him. Since this is true, then how could it be that The Law didn't work as it should have? God created The Law and since our salvation is paramount to Him, it is impossible to fathom that something like this wouldn't work as planned. If that was the case, than what else in the universe was made halfheartedly? The answer of course is nothing. Gravity works the way it has to work. You don't drop your keys and sometimes they fly up in the air instead of falling to the ground. Or sometimes the sun rises and other days it doesn't. The same is true with salvation and The Law, it didn't only work part way and so God had to implement a second plan of salvation by way of Grace. No, God made The Law and that Law worked exactly as He planned it to work.

A Change Of Mind

That brings us to our third and final possible scenario. The Law worked but God decided to change how we are to be saved. Not that there was anything wrong with The Law, but that He simply just changed His mind about it and therefore changed how we are to be saved. This could be a viable scenario if we can determine if God would have changed His mind about anything. Does God do that? Can God do that? Can the creator of all and Lord of all change His mind about anything, especially about the utmost important subject of salvation?

As in the second scenario, here too we must remember how important this is. Salvation is not something that God does half way. Therefore God would not change His mind on this like someone getting board with a show on TV and changing the channel to something better to watch. Also, like in the second scenario, if this was the case here then there would be many other things in the universe that changed how they worked. But that certainly is not the case. **Job 25:2 ...he establishes order in the heights of heaven.** Job tells us here that the Lord is a God of order and to make changes in the way things work would be very chaotic. And again in **1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.** Where would the peace be in a universe that is constantly changing?

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If this is not enough to convince us that God does not – and cannot – change things in such a way, perhaps **Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever**. That is a very long time. Forever – backwards and forwards in time. So since God does not – and more importantly cannot – change His mind on things, then this means that this scenario is also not possible. The Law was not a way to salvation that worked just fine and then God switched His TV remote to the Grace show.

A Choice

Where does that leave us then? All three of our scenarios either don't make sense or are not possible conclusions as to why Christians say that The Law is no longer valid. There must be a fourth scenario – and there is. Is it possible that the fourth scenario is that there is more than one way for salvation? That either Law or Grace would work to make one righteous. This would mean that we have a choice to which way we want to take to achieve salvation. Well, this cannot be.

The purpose of Grace is to make those that accept it righteous before God. It takes away all of our sins so we can be counted as righteous and be able to enter in to His presence. How can we be cleansed of our sins? It is only through **the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)**. There is no other way. There are no choices in which way we want to be saved from our sins and go before God. **John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

We need to call attention to a tremendous point that is usually over looked here. When did Jesus say these words? Was it before or after He died on the cross and was raised from the dead? It was before. What was in control at that time – Law or Grace? It was The Law. So shouldn't Jesus have qualified His statement? Saying something like, "after I come in to my glory, I will be the way. And once I rise, then no one will come to the Father except through me." Absolutely not. He said what He said because that was – and still is – the truth. Jesus references Grace in the present time, even though it had not yet happened. This statement of His was made while being "under The Law". How can this be? How can Grace be the only way when Grace was not yet present in the world?

Now Where Does That Leave Us

Hold that thought for a moment. Let's first review what we have so far. Because what we have now seems to be more questions and no answers. But we can begin to make some conclusion, even though we have not finished all of our study on this subject. We need to sift away what is clouding the water so as to see more clearly what is left. That way we can better see the truth that we are seeking.

What we have seen so far is that what the Lord creates will always work and it will work as He planned it to work. He does not make something that will not work the way He intends it to work. Plus He does not change his mind. He has a plan and all things go according to His plan. We have proven all this by going through the possible scenarios on The Law being a way to salvation. We also know that there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus and not by The Law. Yet this statement was made before Grace had even taken effect. This can only leave us with one very important conclusion regarding The Law. We simply have predetermined The Law to be responsible for doing something it is not made to do. In other words, we have pegged The Law as having the wrong job.

The Law never was, nor is it now, made for salvation. Therefore when Christians say, "we are under Grace not Law" it doesn't make any sense. You are comparing two things that are not the same. So if The Law isn't made for salvations than what is it made for? And whatever it is made for, do Christians need to follow or be concerned about what it is that The Law is capable of doing? And we can't forget about the before Law either. What about then? These are the true questions that need to be answered.

We will answer all of this in our conclusion to this series – part three.