

The Law Versus Grace Debate

Conclusions

By Mark E. Benjamin

This is part three 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 leading in to the study of Law and Grace. Then in part two we went over the possible scenarios that could be at work with Law and Grace. In this part we hope to bring it all together and make some conclusions so that we can be more convicted in our beliefs and more convincing in our witness.

We concluded the second part of this study with making the statement that The Law was never intended to be a way of salvation – only Grace can do that. We also concluded that whatever The Law is meant to accomplish, it works perfectly at accomplishing it simply because the Lord cannot make something that would not work to the way He designed it to work.

Further more, we showed proof that people were indeed made righteous before Grace. That when there was only The Law, salvation was possible and there were those that were saved. Even though salvation was not accomplished through The Law, and Grace had not yet come, these people still obtained righteousness.

Before The Law

Here is where we now need to go farther back in history. Back to a time when even The Law did not yet come in to being. We need to do this for a few reasons; one of them is to further prove that The Law has nothing to do with salvation and making someone righteous. We have tremendous proof of this in Abraham. There are many references to this throughout the Bible but we find the actual account of when it happened in **Genesis 15:6 (New Living) And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous...**

So we see that Abraham was made righteous. This occurred before Grace came and even before The Law came. This is more proof that The Law cannot make one righteous, since Abraham was made righteous long before The Law came in to existence. But we have also said that this is something that only Grace can do. So how was Abraham made righteous? The Apostle Paul devoted a great deal of his letter to the Romans about this very thing. Therefore, we will let Paul answer this.

I would strongly suggest for you to read the entire book of Romans, but Paul makes a reference to the Genesis passage in **Romans 4:13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.** Let's also add the rest of the previous verse that I stated above (**Genesis 15:6**) ... **because of his faith.** It was not The Law – since The Law was not yet present – it was faith that allowed Abraham to become righteous.

So is faith and Grace the same thing? No. Someone can only be saved by the Grace that comes from the resurrection of Jesus. We saw that in part two of this series. But it is faith that activates Grace in our lives. Without faith, Grace does not work – but Grace is the only thing that can save us and make us righteous before the Lord. Let me explain.

Before I was saved, was there Grace? Of course there was. Grace has been here for 2,000 years now. It is Grace and Grace alone that can make me righteous before God. And that Grace was there before I was saved. For certainly I was not born righteous – none of us are. But this does not mean that Grace is not there waiting to make me righteous. Grace can and will save me; but not until I accept it. That acceptance of Grace is only done by faith. Consequently, Grace is the only thing that can save me but I will not be saved until I have faith.

Putting this in a different way. I have a car that I drive to work. It is the car that gets me there – nothing else but the car can get me to work. But I need to put gas in that car for the car to function. I can stand in my driveway next to my car all I want, but until I get in my car it will never get me to work. Likewise, if I am sitting in my car and I don't put gas in it, I can sit there all day and I will never get to work. Why not? Is it because the car is incapable of getting me there? No. the car is completely capable – it is because I didn't put gas in the car.

The Law Versus Grace Debate

Conclusions

By Mark E. Benjamin

It is the same with Grace and faith. I can stand there all my life right next to Grace, but if I don't have faith to fuel it; I will never get to where I want to be. Where I want to be is to be righteous before The Lord. Grace is still able to get me there – just like my car – but if I don't use faith it will do me no good.

This brings us to another conclusion. That is that in the time before The Law, people were still saved because of faith in the promise that Grace was coming to make them righteous. To show how it is Grace fueled by faith that saves us and not The Law that saves, let's look at a criminal.

Death And Resurrection

We know that Grace was introduced in to the world when Jesus was resurrected, not just when he died on the cross. His death on the cross was needed to pay for our sins and if he would have stayed dead, our sins would be forgiven but we would not live in glory. His death was only half of Grace. We live in righteousness because He lives as well, so it is His resurrection that initiated Grace. Before His rising there was no Grace to save anyone. Yes, His death and resurrection are very closely knitted together. In fact you cannot have one without the other and both are needed for Grace. But the point here is that His death alone would not save us, but His resurrection after His death does. We have a gap of time – 3 days worth – between His death and resurrection. Watch the amazing thing that happens in that small window of time.

One of the criminals hanging on a cross next to Jesus was saved and made righteous. In **Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."** When did Jesus say this? It was before his death and resurrection; so Grace was not yet in the world. The criminal died sometime between Jesus' death and when He was resurrected. We know this from **John 19:31-34**. The soldiers broke the legs of the criminals so as to hurry up their death sentence because they wanted to take their bodies down before the Sabbath. But they did not do this to Jesus because He was already dead. So how was this criminal – who died between Jesus death and before His resurrection – made righteous? Grace was not yet present in the world and he was unable to try and follow any of The Law while he was hanging on the cross. Just like with Abraham, it was his faith that saved him. His faith that there was a promise made to him that he would be saved. A promise of Grace.

We see yet again that it is only Grace that saves and it is faith that claims that Grace to be real in our lives. In fact faith is such a powerful part of Grace that it could save a person even before Grace was actually put in to place. So again where does that leave The Law? What is its purpose?

The Purpose Of The Law

Galatians 3:19 asks that very question **"What, then, was the purpose of the law?"** The answer in verse **24 (NAS)** **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.** In other words, the job of The Law is to show us we need the Grace that comes from Jesus. Without The Law we would never know we need Grace, even though we still do need it. The job of The Law is to teach us we need Grace by showing us our sins. The Law shows us what we are doing wrong, and knowing that no one that does wrong (sins) will ever be able to stand before the Lord; we are then forced in seeing that we must have Grace to be saved.

Here's an example. If I say or do something that hurts someone else, I need to ask for that person's forgiveness. What if I don't know that what I said or did hurt that person, do I still need to ask for their forgiveness? Yes, to make things right between us I still do, even when I don't know that I did something wrong. My ignorance of my wrong doing does not justify me. This is how The Law works too. The Law lets me know that I need to ask God's forgiveness because I said or did something that hurt Him. If there was no Law, I would never know that I am hurting God and therefore I would never know I need forgiveness. And if I don't know I need forgiveness, then I will never know that I need Grace and I would not be saved from my sins. My lack of knowledge in my sin does not justify me, just like when I wrong someone else and didn't know it; I am not forgiven for my wrong doing.

The Law Versus Grace Debate

Conclusions

By Mark E. Benjamin

So it is Grace that saves us. It is faith that activates that Grace in our lives. But it is The Law that shows us we need to have Grace in the first place. This has always been the purpose of The Law and it has always worked in this manner. The purpose of The Law has never changed since it was introduced through Moses. It still works in that same way today and it will work this way forever. Jesus Himself says in **Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.** None of The Law will go away simply because its purpose is still needed. We all still need to know what sin is so that we can all know that we need to have Grace. Without knowing we need Grace, we will not accept it by faith and therefore we will never become righteous before God.

We need to fully understand all of this for two main reasons that have been mentioned before. Hopefully now we can see why this is so important. What could be more important than deepening our understanding of our faith? To completely comprehend why we believe what it is we say we believe in. And secondly, is to be more credible and effective when witnessing to others. We can only achieve this by saying the correct things. Making sure that we are not confused about what we believe in.

Say What You Mean And Know What It Is You Say

There are some catch phrases that Christians use all the time with this subject. I truly believe that they do not know what it is they are saying – or how it adversely affects their witness. Especially when talking with Jews.

For instance, Christians will say, “I’m saved by Grace and not by the Law.” Well, that is true – but it makes no sense what so ever. It would be like saying, “I drive to work in my car and not in my computer.” This is also a very true statement. I do drive a car to work and I do not drive a computer to work. But they are two unrelated things. The reason I drive my car to work is so I can work on my computer. The computer is what shows me I need to drive my car to work. If it wasn’t for my computer at work, I would have no reason to drive there. It’s the same with Law and Grace.

It is The Law that shows me I need to be saved by Grace. So even though it is a true statement that I am not saved by The Law and I am only saved by Grace, it makes no sense to say that. Grace is how I am saved but it is The Law that gives me the reason to want Grace and be saved. Therefore, it is a true statement when Christians say, “I’m saved by Grace and not by The Law.” But it tends to make us sound silly in what we say since they are as related as a car and a computer.

Another thing that Christians say a lot is, “I have Grace so I do not need The Law.” Not only does this statement not make sense but it is also false. What is it that Paul has shown us The Law is for? It is so we know we need to have Grace. Then if we say we do not need The Law, in actuality we are saying that we do not need to have Grace. The Law shows us the importance of Grace. How will we know how important Grace is if we have nothing to show us its importance?

It is sort of like the Antique Road Show. On that show many people bring things in that they have no idea of its value. Someone might have something – let’s say a chair – and they say to the expert that is on the show that they think it might be worth \$100. It’s just an old chair that they have in the corner of the living room and they throw their coats on it in the winter. The expert looks it over and tells them the chair is worth \$25,000. The person that brought that chair had no idea how valuable it was until they were told of its true value. How do you think they will treat that chair now? It will be moved out of the corner and put in a place of honor, and you can bet they will not throw their coats on it any more. In fact they will tell everyone they meet about that chair. When did their chair get its value? Was it before or after they took it to the Antique Road Show? Before. It was just as valuable before they took it to the show as it was after – they just didn’t realize it until an expert told them.

It is the same with The Law as well. The Law shows us how important Grace is. Without The Law, Grace is pointless; or at the very least, it becomes less valuable. So how can a Christian – whose faith is based on Grace – say that Grace is unimportant? By saying we do not need The Law; that is exactly what we are doing. Grace becomes something we keep in the corner until we need it, but in the mean time we nonchalantly toss our coats on it

The Law Versus Grace Debate

Conclusions

By Mark E. Benjamin

covering its beauty and value. But with The Law ever present in our minds showing all our sins to us; it exposes how desperately we need to have Grace. Therefore Grace becomes so much more valuable to us and we treat Grace with the respect and honor it deserves. And we then tell everyone we meet how important Grace is to us. When a Christian states they do not need The Law, I question what they think about Grace and its importance.

Furthermore, what kind of witness is it to say that Grace is unimportant and then go on to tell others it is something they need to have? No, The Law is important and it is something that Christians must understand how important, and that we must be concerned about it as well.

Does this mean we should follow The Law to the letter, even those that have to do with sacrifices and things of that nature? Let me put it this way. Christians follow the Laws on sacrifices more closely than anyone, but they just don't realize it. The purpose of animal sacrifices was to redeem us from our sins; but when Jesus became our final sacrifice, we no longer have sin that we need to be redeemed from. This of course does not mean that Christians are sinless. It only means that our sacrifice is Jesus. Sacrifice for our sins is still needed, but it is fulfilled in Jesus. Even still, we should want to still give sacrifices. Not ones of animals, but of our time, money and talents.

Who would actually think that God has now decided that any of the other Laws – like the original Ten Commandments – are not needed to be followed by Christians? Jesus condensed all ten of those into love God and love your neighbor ([Luke 10:27](#)). So Christians should follow The Laws found in the Bible. Remember, they are God's Laws – not man's. Can anyone show a Law from God that a Christian should not follow? Lying, stealing, coveting, etc. which one of these could possibly be OK for Christians to not follow?

Following The Law is simply doing the will of God. But that isn't the point of The Law. Whether we follow them or not is not as important as realizing what The Law is and what it is here to do. That is to show us how much we need Grace and how important Grace is. Following The Laws will not get us closer to being righteous before the Lord or provided us with salvation. Although, Christians are always saying, "I wish I knew what God wants" or "I wonder what God's will is for me?" That's easy to figure out – follow His Laws and you are guaranteed to always be within His will and doing what He wants you to do.

Hopefully we can better understand what Law, Grace, and faith are. What their purposes are and how they interact with each other. Grace is the only way to salvation. Faith is what activates Grace in us. The Law shows us how desperately we need Grace. Without all three, a Christian will not be as an effective witness to the Jews or anyone.