



# LAW OR GRACE

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‘Law or Grace’  
by  
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## *In the Beginning*

God created a perfect world and perfect people to live in it – Adam and Eve, and they had a perfect relationship with Him. He gave them just one rule in Genesis 2:16-17 – *“You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.”* But Satan deceived them into disobeying that one rule and everything changed. The perfect world became corrupt and, although they didn't die physically, Adam and Eve's perfect spirits died and were replaced by ones of sin.

Their first reaction to having disobeyed God was to hide. Their relationship with Him was no longer perfect. It hadn't changed on God's side, but they had changed. They could no longer relate to Him with the same openness, even though His love for them was still the same. The first thing they were aware of was that they were naked. Genesis 2:25 says that previously – *‘The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed.’* But now they had lost their innocence and become self-focused. Genesis 3:8-10 says – *‘the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>The man said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; so I hid myself.”’*

From then on, everyone was born with the same sin nature that Adam and Eve now had. People sinned more and more until God decided He needed to show them just how far they fell short of His perfect standards. So He gave them the law through Moses.

## The Law

The law contained lots of detailed commandments for the people to obey. Most were concerned with outward actions – things they must do or mustn't do. But there were also some about what their heart attitude should be. God said they would be blessed if they kept all these commandments and cursed if they didn't. You can read these blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28. But it was more complicated than it sounds, as He said that if someone disobeyed even the smallest of the rules, they were guilty of them all. James 2:10 explains – *'whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.'* It wasn't like an exam with a pass mark of a certain percent. No, if you got 99% you failed. It was 100% or nothing. It was like a pane of glass. If you chipped it or smashed it, it was spoilt.

However, the law was impossible to keep perfectly. For example, Deuteronomy 10:12 told them to – *'serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,'* Just think about this – they were to live for God with all their heart (a right inner attitude) and with all their soul (with right thoughts and emotions) all the time. No-one could ever do that. Everyone was bound to fail.

So why did God give the law? It wasn't so people would know right from wrong and so be able to earn their way to heaven. It was the exact opposite. God knew no-one would ever be able to keep it perfectly and He wanted them to realise they couldn't save themselves and that they needed a saviour. Galatians 3:19 says – *'Then why is there the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring (Jesus) should come to whom the promise has been made.'*

The law made people much more aware of sin, it didn't set them free from it. 1 Corinthians 15:56 says – *'the power of sin is the law.'* The law made sin stronger by drawing attention to it. Paul called it *'the service of condemnation'* in 2 Corinthians 3:9 and *'the service of death'* in 2 Corinthians 3:7. It made people realise they were condemned by their sin and that the outcome was death. The Law gave them guilt and knowledge of sin, not salvation. Romans 3:19-20 says the law was given – *'that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgement of God. <sup>20</sup>Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.'* It showed people that they could never live perfectly, so they were left with no excuses.

God also established a system of animal sacrifices which the priests offered so the people could be forgiven. But these sacrifices could never actually deal with sin – they only covered it until the next time. It was a ritual that had to be continually repeated. Hebrews 10:1&3-4 says that the law – *'can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. ... <sup>3</sup>But in those sacrifices there is a yearly reminder of sins. <sup>4</sup>For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.'* The sacrifices themselves, although they covered sin, also served to bring attention to sin. This was the whole purpose of the law. God wanted people to know that they could never be good enough to earn His love and would never deserve to be in a personal relationship with Him. He wanted them to realise that they needed a saviour and look towards the Messiah who was to come and who the prophets had told them about. And this would be fulfilled in Jesus. He was the promised Messiah who was sent to save the people from their sins once and for all.

God never intended the law to be God's final solution. Galatians 3:21-22 says – *'For if there had been a law given which could make alive, most certainly righteousness would have been of the law. <sup>22</sup>But the Scripture imprisoned all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.'* It was only through Jesus that God was able to deal with sin once and for all. It was only through grace that salvation would come.

## *The Grace of God*

Romans 5:8 says – *'But God commends his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'* This is the grace of God in action – His unconditional love pouring out unconditional mercy on us. It can be described as God's Riches At Christ's Expense. God's grace sent Jesus to earth to die while people were still sinners. And it's the same for us today. God's grace offers us salvation freely right in the middle of whatever we are doing. John 1:16-17 says – *'From his fullness we all received grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realised through Jesus Christ.'*

The sacrifices associated with the law couldn't deal with sin, they could only cover it. Hebrews 10:11-12 says – *'Every priest indeed stands day by day serving and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, <sup>12</sup>but he (Jesus), when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.'* But when Jesus sacrificed Himself for sin it was once for all: for all sin, for all people and for all time. And then He returned to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, so demonstrating that the work He'd done in taking away our sins was finished and would never need to be repeated. Jesus did all that was needed for us to be totally forgiven of all sin for all time.

Any time God did something negative against people under the law, it was to punish them for their sin. But when Jesus came, He took the punishment for the sin of the whole world: past, present and future. Titus 2:11 says – *‘For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.’* So now God will never punish us if we put our faith in what Jesus has done, because we are now under grace, not law. Ephesians 1:6 says in the King James Version – *‘To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.’* Isn't that beautiful. The grace of God has made us accepted through Jesus. We all long for acceptance. The law could never give it us, but God in His grace has freely made us acceptable to God through Jesus. No longer do we have to obey rules and regulations to be accepted by God. Now all we have to do is believe in what Jesus did for us and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour. We need to put our faith in the grace God showered on us when Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved. Ephesians 2:8 says – *‘for by grace you have been saved through faith.’* (To read about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet)

Under the law, God had declared blessings and curses on the people according as to whether they obeyed all the rules or not. As no-one could keep the whole law, everyone was under the curse. Galatians 3:10 explains – *‘For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who doesn’t continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.”’* But the grace of God cursed Jesus instead of us. Galatians 3:13 says – *‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,”’* This means that, not only are we free from the curse even when we sin, but we are now free to walk in God’s blessings if we will believe and receive them. That's amazing grace. And because our sin can never now stand

between us and God, His grace invites us into His family. Galatians 4:4-5 – *‘when the fullness of the time came, God sent out his Son, born to a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as children.’*

Jesus fulfilled the law for us – He did what we could never do. And the result is that, because Jesus willingly suffered what He didn’t deserve: the punishment for our sin with all its shame and guilt, we can have what we could never earn or deserve – a love relationship with God. We have it only because of His grace and the faith we put in Jesus. Galatians 2:16 says – *‘yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law.’*

## ***Contrast Works and Grace***

It is still possible for us to live by the same principle of the law today, trying to earn God’s favour and our salvation by what we do. The New Testament calls this ‘works’. But our works can never save us. Ephesians 2:8-9 says – *‘for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, that no one would boast.’* We can read the Bible, pray, go to church etc. All these things are good and will help us grow as Christians, but none will gain us anything with God. The Christian faith isn't about works; it’s about relationship with our Father and living freely under His grace. When we obey God under grace we’re doing it, not in order to earn His love, but in response to His love for us. When you realise the fulness of God’s grace poured out on you, you will want to respond to it by living a life that pleases God. Instead of trying to do the right

thing, you will want to do it. There is a huge difference between those two. Grace doesn't free us to sin, but from the hold of sin.

Under grace we have one commandment which Jesus gives us in John 13:34 – *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also love one another.”* We'll live a far better life in response to God's grace than we ever could trying to be 'good'. Let's look at some of the many contrasts between living by works and living under grace.

- Works is us working for God, but grace is God working for us
- Works is us trying to change ourselves but grace acknowledges that Jesus has changed us
- Works tries to earn God's favour, but grace says thank You that I have Your favour through Jesus
- Works is all about what we should do for God, but grace is all about what Jesus has done for us
- Works says we must obey to be blessed, but grace says we are blessed and therefore will want to obey
- Works says we are to do in order to receive, but grace says we receive in order to do

## *Choose Grace*

You can't live by works and under grace at the same time. It's one or the other. Romans 11:6 says – *‘And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.’* Romans 6:14 says that if you are born-again – *‘you are not under law, but under grace.’* This is spiritually true, but are you actually under grace or are you trying to earn God's favour by your own works? If the law or works could have saved us, then there was no point in Jesus coming to earth and going through

the agony of His torture and death. Galatians 2:21 says – *‘I don’t reject the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!’* God’s grace is the only way to the abundant life Jesus came to give you.

Thank God for His grace and make a decision now to accept the it and choose to live in it. Only the grace of God can set you free. Galatians 5:1 tells us to – *‘Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don’t be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.’* Decide today to stop living in the bondage of works and start living in the grace of God. You will never regret it as you experience more and more of God’s unconditional love for you through Jesus. Thank You Lord for your amazing grace!

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## *Being Born-Again*

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart – “Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour.”

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you’ll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

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Why did God give the law?  
And what is His grace?

Discover the difference between the two  
so you can choose  
to stop trying to earn God's love  
and favour by how you live  
and step into the freedom of His grace.  
Then you'll want to work for Him out of love, not duty.



**Katherine Hilditch** has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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