

**THE ETERNAL LAW AND SAVING GRACE**

In our last study we found that the Bible teaches the existence of, and man's responsibility to keep, the ten commandments - from Adam's day to the very end of this world. The ten commandments contain the very principles of the holy character of God Himself. If God is timeless and changeless (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), it follows that His commandments would also be timeless and changeless.

The function of the ten commandments has ever been to reveal God's character to mankind, thus showing man where he is out of harmony with God (Romans 3:20; 4:15). As "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), God has graciously provided forgiveness for sin, as we accept Christ's sacrifice for us (John 3:16). God wants sinners to believe, to be cleansed of their sins, and to accept His power which will enable them to again become like Him, to have characters like His character which has been revealed in His ten commandments.

"Law and grace"--there has been much misunderstanding on this subject. God is righteousness. God is love. God is law. God is merciful. God offers pardon, unmerited favor, grace. Law and grace are both necessary in order that we may see more clearly exactly what God is like, and what He wants us to be like. Let us see how fully we can understand this topic from God's holy Bible.

1. By way of review, what do the following Scripture passages teach us about "sin"?
  - (a) Romans 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) 1 John 3:4 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) Proverbs 14:34 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) James 4:17 \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Bible is very clear that "sin" is sin, regardless of whether man lived in Old Testament or New Testament times. Moreover, forgiveness for sin is found in only one way, Old or New Testaments. Faith in the innocent blood of the Old Testament sacrifice, and the Christ to Whom it pointed, brought forgiveness. Faith in the innocent shed blood of Christ will always bring forgiveness. Review this wonderful truth in these texts.
  - (a) Romans 5:9,10,17,18 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Romans 3:24,25 \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) Ephesians 1:7 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Now comes the vital question of this study. Does the coming of grace into our lives free us from keeping the ten commandments? It is in relation to this question that the writings of the apostle Paul have often been misunderstood. Paul faced some very specific and unique "law" problems in his day. For example:
  1. There were many who continued to observe the Jewish ceremonial rites and practices which had no purpose after the time of Christ's crucifixion.

2. There were many of both Jews and Christians during Paul's ministry who were trying (futilely) to be saved by their works, by adherence to traditions (Matthew 15:9), by boasting of their law keeping.
3. And there were those who were minimizing the place and importance of Sinai's ten commandments.

Paul's counsel on "law" must be understood in light of these problems, and in connection with the audiences to whom he spoke and wrote. And we must be discerning, in the New Testament, when the term "law" is used, to see if it is the ten commandments that are being referred to, or the ceremonial law (sacrifices, circumcision, statutes), or to the five books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy) which were often called "law," or to the entire Old Testament, or even to the Jewish legal system. This may seem like a difficult task, but with careful study it can be clear to all.

- (a) What does the book of Hebrews say about the need to follow Jewish ceremonies after Christ died and put an end to that era of history?

Hebrews 9:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

- (b) How does Paul speak of the impossibility of salvation by works in Romans 10:4? (See also Galatians 2:21.)

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- (c) How does Paul speak of the ten commandments in Romans 7:7,12?

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(Note: New Testament writers all clearly uphold the eternal ten commandments. They reveal to us the character of God since the beginning of earth's history, thus are eternal as God is eternal. They function to point out sin. That has also always been their function with sinners. Thus they lead us to seek Christ, Who forgives our sins and saves. And Christ's grace and love in our hearts enable us to become obedient to God's will. Obedience is the result of our dedication to Christ, thus we are not saved by what we do. We do right because He lives within us, and by His power. We have nothing to boast about, only a God to praise.)

4. With these truths in mind, we are then able to correctly understand the following passages from Romans, passages very often misunderstood today.

- (a) Romans 3:28-31 \_\_\_\_\_

(Salvation comes as we have faith in God's saving grace (Eph. 2:8). The purpose of the law of God (as in Romans 3:20) remains the same. If God could have removed the commandments, then man would not need His saving grace and forgiveness.)

- (b) Romans 6:14,15 \_\_\_\_\_

(The problem here is not a question of law, or no law. Rather, when one is forgiven, he or she is no longer under condemnation of the law. But if one sins again, the function of the law again exerts itself, and points out sin. And Jesus continues to be willing to forgive (1 John 2:1), and thus removes further condemnation. Rather than be discouraged by

further mistakes, we can always praise God for His never-ending forgiveness, and for His peace of mind that is ours as we live without condemnation.)

(c) Romans 7:13-25 \_\_\_\_\_

(God's requirements will always be at opposites with "human" desires. Our humanness entices us to go our way, not God's. We all struggle. That is, until we let God have full control. Then, with our Lord freely forgiving us, we also find the Source of both desire, and power, to follow Him in willing obedience.)

5. Re-think these four powerful verses of Scripture: Hebrews 8:10, John 14:15, Psalms 40:8, and Galatians 2:20.

Every true Christian will discover that **God's commandments** will always serve to **point out sin**, and **reveal exactly what kind of a person God is**, what kind of a character He has. This, again, is their double function.

Then we will find, that what **God's saving grace** does, is to so **change our hearts** and **fill them with His love**, so that an **obedience that God can accept is produced**.

Grace, instead of removing the obligation to keep the commandments, actually makes it greater! But it also makes it delightful! **Salvation by grace** means that **I permit Christ to live within me daily**. And as He does, **He makes me like Himself**, - loving to God, loving to man,--which truly is to be like God is.

**Christ's death** did not abolish the law, rather it showed that **the law could not be abolished**. Rather it **established forever salvation by grace**, and **the need for enabling power** to come into harmony with the heavenly principles revealed to us in the commandments.

I must ask myself one question: **Will I permit Him to work out His full purpose in my life?** I receive Christ's righteousness by receiving Him as my personal Saviour. As He lives in me, by my permission (my choice), He makes a demonstration of His pure and holy life. I become a "case exhibit" to others of the saving power of God. Will I let Him do this?

