



LAW TO GRACE*

After being raised from the dead, Jesus explained to His disciples that through His life, death, and resurrection, He fulfilled the Old Covenant. He also established and sealed the New Covenant with His blood. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, which we know of as the Old Testament, particularly the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, to reveal what had been accomplished by God's power through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus also told His followers to wait for power from heaven which would institute a whole new way of doing things. (See Luke 24:45-49.)

*Matthew 5:17: Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.***

*Matthew 26:28: This is **my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

*Hebrews 8:13: **By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete**; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.*

FROM OLD TO NEW

The Old Covenant is the Law of God which required measuring up to God's standard through perfect obedience to God's requirements in order to earn right standing with God and access to God. The Law of God is called the Torah and is found in the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch. It contains God's requirements for obedience, righteous behavior, and the blood sacrifices to atone for sin and errors. If God's standard was not met, the community or individual remained under a curse and deserved the death penalty for rebellion against God.

Without Jesus, we are spiritually living in the kingdom of darkness which is the domain of the evil one. The only way to regain access to God is through perfect obedience to His required standard which He expressed in the Law. Without Jesus, the only blessings we have access to are the ones God chooses to bestow upon us out of His own good will towards us because we are incapable of deserving them through our own attempts at righteousness.

*Matthew 5:45b: He [God] **causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.***

However, Jesus' perfect obedience to God's Law makes Him the only person ever in history to measure up to God's standard of perfection. Jesus' sacrifice paid the price for all of our errors, mistakes, and rebellion against God. Therefore, when we believe Jesus, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light – the Kingdom of Heaven where we are already spiritually seated with Christ.

*Colossians 1:13-14: **He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

*Ephesians 2:6: And God raised us up with Christ and **seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus***

The New Covenant is the way of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Believers receive right standing with God as a free gift and access to Him along with all the blessings this entails. In other words, when we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we are no longer required to measure up to

God's standard because Jesus measured up for us. In the New Covenant of Christ, we are not blessed or cursed because of our own obedience or lack thereof. We are blessed by God because of Christ's obedience which satisfied the Old Covenant requirement completely.

*Romans 5:1-2: Therefore, since **we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace** in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

By faith, we enter into the cleansing from our own unrighteousness and by faith, we receive Jesus' perfect record as if it were our own. We have been set free from the Law of sin and death!

SET FREE FROM STRIVING

Think of it this way: have you ever parked your car in a parking garage where there is a fee for parking? If so, then you know that there is a difference between when you have to pay to leave the parking garage and when you have visited the right person who can offer parking validation. When your parking ticket is validated, you do not have to pay because your ticket has been stamped PAID by the person you visited. This is what happens through faith in Jesus. Everyone since Adam has had an un-payable parking fee and has been stuck in the oppressive and miserable "parking lot" of the evil one's domain. Under the Old Covenant, the Law was the fee schedule for paying our way out of the parking garage and perfect obedience was the only way to be released. Nobody in all of history had ever been able to pay the fee and leave. However, through the New Covenant in Christ, we receive a PAID stamp on our lives because Jesus' perfect obedience PAID the fee for everyone who will believe. Therefore, we are free to leave the "parking garage" of the evil one's control over our lives once and for all. Jesus PAID for our freedom forever from all oppression of any sort including everything we may have done in our past, bad circumstances, sickness, poor relationships, poor self-image, all demonic oppression through evil spirits, and everything else included in the curse of the Law of God. (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Leviticus 26:15-39.) We stand justified before God as if we never had a parking fee at all because our ticket is stamped PAID. We are totally free in Christ.

This transfer from Law to grace could also be called graduating from Romans chapter 7 to Romans chapter 8. In Romans 7, the apostle Paul described how, when he lived under the Law, the Law invoked in him an uncanny war between what he knew was the right thing to do and what he actually did. It seemed that the more he tried to do what was right, the more wrong he did. He said, in effect, "I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I do want to do." Finally, in exasperation, he gave up and denounced himself as a wretched man. (See Romans 7:15-24.) I call this getting stuck in the *do do*, pronounced *doo doo*. For those of you who don't know, in my culture *doo doo* is an expression used for excrement, like the kind from a dog that we might accidentally step in from time to time. Getting stuck in the *do do* is no fun for anyone much like life under the Law because we can never measure up by what we *do do*. But Paul used this demonstration from his own life to guide us into the glorious freedom from the Law which we now have through faith in Christ. He graduated from Law-mindedness in Romans 7 to grace and Holy Spirit-mindedness in Romans 8. He then boldly declared that those who have placed their faith in Christ are not in the *do do* anymore. Why? Because we no longer live as those who are measured by what we *do* but as those who have direct access to God because of what Jesus *did*. Accordingly, we no longer strive to obey God's Law to be good or to measure up through our conduct. Rather, now we strive to rest in Jesus' perfect obedience on our behalf and to obey the Holy Spirit within us.

*Romans 8:1-2: Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.***

Significantly, this will also change the way we live and the way we pray. When we live according to the Law, the only thing to pray for is God's mercy because we can never and will never measure up and deserve curse over blessing. Typically, this leaves us looking for new methods or techniques of prayer or

piety in order to attain what we seek and we are never quite sure of God's goodness or willingness to fulfill His promises.

However, when we live as those who have been established in the righteousness of Christ, we know that God's mercy is never failing because Jesus took the penalty we deserve. Therefore, we can pray boldly and confidently for God, our Father, to bring His kingdom to earth as *it is in heaven* as an extension of God's grace, mercy, and fulfilled promises to everyone who will receive it by faith.

*Hebrews 4:16: Let us then **approach God's throne of grace with confidence**, so that we may **receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need**.*

GRACE TO LOVE

Thayer's Greek Lexicon definition of God's grace includes the fact that we receive favor and preferential treatment from God that we do not deserve but also describes God's grace as, "the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues." This means that through the transfer from Law to grace, not only does God not hold our imperfections and weaknesses against us – His grace gives us power to do His will.

This is important because the commands of the New Covenant are slightly different than the Law. Under the Old Covenant, the Law commands us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself." (See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27; quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18.) When we function from a Law mindset, we are constantly trying to prove our love for by working really hard in our own strength to show off our righteousness or try to do enough good deeds to earn His blessing. Our focus remains entirely on ourselves and developing our own righteousness, no matter how much we try to convince ourselves that we are loving and serving other people.

However, Jesus gave us a new command in the New Covenant: to love others as He has loved us.

*John 13:34: **A new command I give you:** Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

*John 15:12, 17: **My command is this:** Love each other as I have loved you. ... **This is my command:** Love each other. (See also 1 John 3:23, 4:10)*

Now instead of striving, we can rest in Christ's love for us. Then, we can love others the way that He loves us by the power of God's grace working within us and through the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us. Our focus shifts off of ourselves and on to Jesus who gives us what we do not deserve and guides us in loving others with grace that they do not deserve.

In short, if we are working to be good or to prove our love for God or for others, then we are not truly doing good works for Christ. In fact, if we are working with a motive of attaining right standing with God, it means that we are still operating under the old way of doing things rather than the new way which Christ established for us. Christ followers have been transferred from old to new, from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from darkness to light, and from Law to grace.

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Scriptures are New International Translation (NIV) unless otherwise noted, emphasis added by author