

Law and Grace

by C.I. Scofield

C.I. Scofield's sermon 'Law and Grace' explores the distinct roles of law and grace in the life of a believer, emphasizing their incompatibility and the transformative power of grace.

Scripture: John 1:17, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:14, Galatians 3:23, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 4:16

Topics: "Law And Grace", "Christian Freedom"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the profound division between law and grace, emphasizing their distinct roles in the Jewish and Christian dispensations. While law reveals God's will through prohibition and requirement, grace showcases God's mercy and bestowal of forgiveness. The sermon highlights the errors of Antinomianism, Ceremonialism, and Galatianism in misinterpreting the relationship between law and grace, stressing the believer's freedom from the law and the importance of living a godly life guided by grace.

Transcript

The most obvious and striking division of the Word of truth is that between law and grace. Indeed, these contrasting principles characterize the two most important dispensations: the Jewish and Christian. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

It is not, of course, meant that there was no law before Moses, any more than that there was no grace and truth before Jesus Christ. The forbidding to Adam of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) was law, and surely grace was most sweetly manifested in the Lord God seeking His sinning creatures and in His clothing them with coats of skins (Gen. 3:21)-a beautiful type of Christ who "is made unto us . . . righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30). Law, in the sense of some revelation of God's will, and grace, in the sense of some revelation of God's goodness, have always existed, and to this Scripture abundantly testifies. But "the law" most frequently mentioned in Scripture was given by Moses, and from Sinai to Calvary, dominates, characterizes, the time; just as grace dominates or gives its peculiar character to the dispensation which begins at Calvary and has its predicted termination in the rapture of the church.

It is, however, of the most vital moment to observe that Scripture never, in any dispensation, mingles these two principles. Law always has a place and work distinct and wholly diverse from that of grace. Law is God prohibiting and requiring; grace is God beseeching and bestowing. Law is a ministry of condemnation; grace, of forgiveness. Law curses; grace redeems from that curse. Law kills; grace makes alive. Law shuts every mouth before God; grace opens every mouth to praise Him. Law puts a great and

guilty distance between man and God; grace makes guilty man nigh to God. Law says, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; grace says, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Law says, "Hate thine enemy"; grace says, "Love your enemies, bless them that despitefully use you." Law says, do and live; grace says, believe and live. Law never had a missionary; grace is to be preached to every creature. Law utterly condemns the best man; grace freely justifies the worst (Luke 23:43; Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim 1:15; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Law is a system of probation; grace, of favor. Law stones an adulteress; grace says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Under law the sheep dies for the shepherd: under grace the Shepherd dies for the sheep.

Everywhere the Scriptures present law and grace in sharply contrasted spheres. The mingling of them in much of the current teaching of the day spoils both, for law is robbed of its terror, and grace of its freeness.

The student should observe that "law" in the New Testament Scriptures, means the law given by Moses (Rom. 7:23 is an exception). Sometimes the entire law (the moral, or the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial) is meant; sometimes the commandments only; sometimes the ceremonial only. Among passages of the first type, Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:16, and 3:2 are examples. Of the second type, Romans 3:19 and 7:7-12 are examples. Of the third type, Colossians 2:14-17 is an example.

It should be remembered also that in the ceremonial law are enshrined those marvelous types-the beautiful foreshadowings of the person and work of the Lord Jesus as priest and sacrifice, as in the tabernacle (Exod. 25-30) and levitical offerings (Lev. 1-7), which must ever be the wonder and delight of the spiritually minded.

Expressions in the Psalms too, which would be inexplicable if understood only of the "ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" (2 Cor. 3:7), are made clear when seen to refer to Christ or to the redeemed. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:2). "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97).

Three errors have troubled the church concerning the right relation of law to grace:

1. Antinomianism- the denial of all rule over the lives of believers; the affirmation that men are not required to live holy lives because they are saved by God's free grace, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude verse 4).

2. Ceremonialism- the demand that believers should observe the levitical ordinances. The modern form of this error is the teaching that Christian ordinances are essential to salvation.

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

3. Galatianism- the mingling of law and grace; the teaching that justification is partly by grace, partly by law, or, that grace is given to enable an otherwise helpless sinner to keep the law. Against this error, the most wide-spread of all, the solemn warnings, the unanswerable logic, the emphatic declarations of the Epistle to the Galatians are God's conclusive answer.

"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:2- 3).

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another [there could not be another gospel]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-8).

The following may be helpful as an outline of Scripture teaching on this important subject. The moral law only is referred to in the passages cited.

WHAT THE LAW IS

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12),

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14).

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22).

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (I Tim. 1:8).

"And the law is not of faith" (Gal. 3:12).

THE LAWFUL USE OF THE LAW

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7; see also verse 13).

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because Of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19).

"Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). Law has but one language: "what things soever." It speaks only to condemn.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3: 10).

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

"The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" (2 Cor. 3:7).

"The ministration of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3:9).

"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9).

"The strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56).

"It is evident, then, that God's purpose in giving the law, after the race had existed twenty-five hundred years without it (John 1: 17; Gal. 3:17), was to bring to guilty man the knowledge of his sin first, and then of his utter helplessness in view of God's just requirements. It is purely and only a ministration of condemnation and death.

WHAT THE LAW CANNOT DO

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21).

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3: 11).

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).

"And by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).

"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7:19).

THE BELIEVER IS NOT UNDER THE LAW

Romans 6, after declaring the doctrine of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, of which baptism is the symbol (verses 1-10), begins, with verse 11, the declarations of the principles which should govern the walk of the believer-his rule of life. This is the subject of the remaining twelve verses. Verse 14 gives the great principle of his deliverance, not from the guilt of sin that is met by Christ's blood, but from the dominion of sin-his bondage* under it. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Lest this should lead to the monstrous Antinomianism of saying that therefore a godly life was not important, the Spirit immediately adds: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15). Surely every renewed heart answers 'Amen' to this.

Then Romans 7 introduces another principle of deliverance from law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:4-6). (This does not refer to the ceremonial law; see verse 7.)

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19).

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up, unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:23-25).

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man" (I Tim. 1:8-9).

WHAT IS THE BELIEVER'S RULE OF LIFE?

"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16).

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Pet. 2:11; see also verses 12-23).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1-2).

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us" (Eph. 5:1-2).

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have, done to you" (John 13:15).

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15: 10).

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21).

'And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (I John 3:22-23).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10: 16).

A beautiful illustration of this principle is seen in a mother's love for her child. The law requires parents to care for their offspring and pronounces penalties for the willful neglect of them; but the land is full of happy mothers who tenderly care for their children in perfect ignorance of the existence of such a statute. The

law is in their hearts.

It is instructive, in this connection, to remember that God's appointed place for the tables of the law was within the ark of the testimony. With them were "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded" (types: the one of Christ our wilderness bread, the other of resurrection, and both speaking of grace), while they were covered from sight by the golden mercy seat upon which was sprinkled the blood of atonement. The eye of God could see His broken law only through the blood that completely vindicated His justice and propitiated His wrath (Heb. 9:4-5).

It was reserved to modernists to wrench these holy and just but deathful tables from underneath the mercy seat and the atoning blood and erect them in Christian churches as the rule of Christian life.

WHAT IS GRACE?

"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared . . . according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:4-5). "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE IN GRACE?

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

"That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

"Being justified freely by his grace; through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:2).

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through f. his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:6-7).

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"(Heb. 4:16).

"How complete, how all-inclusive! Grace saves, justifies, builds up, makes accepted, redeems, forgives, bestows an inheritance, gives standing before God, provides a throne of grace to which we may come

boldly for mercy and help; it teaches us how to live and gives us a blessed hope! It remains to note that these diverse principles cannot be intermingled.

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4-5; see also Gal. 3:16-18; 4:21-31).

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free" (Gal. 4:31).

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words: which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:18-24).

It is not, then a question of dividing what God spoke from Sinai into moral law and ceremonial law-the believer does not come to that mount at all.

As sound old Bunyan said: "The believer is now, by faith in the Lord Jesus, shrouded under so perfect and blessed a righteousness, that this thundering law of Mount Sinai cannot find the least fault or diminution therein. This is called the righteousness of God without the law."

Should this meet the eye of an unbeliever, he is affectionately exhorted to accept the true sentence of that holy and just law which he has violated: "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22-23). In Christ such will find a perfect and eternal salvation, as it is written: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9); for Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4).

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