

# Contrasts Between Law and Grace Teachings

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the differences between the principle of law and the principle of grace in the divine government of humanity.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 7:12, Luke 24:27, John 5:24, John 16:24, Romans 12:17, 1 Corinthians 10:1, Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 4:32, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Law And Grace", "Divine Government"

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## Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer preaches about the distinct differences between the principles of law and grace as applied to divine government in humanity, emphasizing the separate and complete systems of divine rule in the law of Moses, teachings of grace, and teachings of the kingdom. He highlights the importance of understanding the unity and continuity of the Scriptures, revealing God's revelation concerning Himself, prophecy fulfillment, union between type and antitype, revelation concerning Satan and evil, doctrine of man and sin, requirement of holiness, and continuity of purpose in God's program throughout the ages.

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## Transcript

Having considered the fact that God provides different rules of life, as recorded in the Scriptures, to fit His succeeding dispensational dealings with humanity, it is important to consider the wide difference which exists between the principle of law, and the principle of grace, as applied to the divine government of humanity.

While the purpose of this section is to emphasize the fact that the three systems of divine government are essentially separate, each one from the others, and each one, being wholly complete and sufficient in itself, is in no wise exchangeable for either of the others, and cannot be commingled, it should be observed that there are important fields of Bible interpretation and instruction besides the limited aspect of truth which is suggested by the various rules of conduct. The Scriptures unfold many highways of truth with unbroken development from "the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The important features of this unity in the Scriptures are:

1. The revelation concerning God. He is first revealed in the Old Testament by His names and works, and to this the New Testament adds the fuller emphasis upon the Trinity, the relation of the persons of the Godhead to humanity, and the various aspects of saving grace. The continuity of the Old Testament testimony concerning Christ was proven by Him on the Emmaus road, as it is recorded: "Beginning at

Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

2. Prophecy and its fulfillment. Every recorded instance of the fulfillment of prophecy shows that every detail of the prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

3. The union between type and antitype. Almost every important truth of the New Testament was typified and foreshadowed in the Old Testament. This fact proves the symmetry of all Scripture (See 1 Cor. 10:1-11).

4. The revelation concerning Satan and evil. In this body of revelation, likewise, the Bible story is uninterrupted, save for the new material added in the development of the divine message.

5. The doctrine of man and his sin. The exact manner of the application of the divine remedy for sin varies from dispensation to dispensation; but there is no variation in all the record concerning the essential facts of human failure, and the gracious, divine remedy through blood alone.

6. The requirement of holiness in the conduct of saints. While there is wide difference between the rules of conduct which are imposed in the various ages, there is unity in the revelation that a holy manner of life is the divine requirement in every age.

7. The continuity of purpose in the program of the ages. In this aspect of the truth it should be observed that, while each age possesses a character exclusively its own, the divine purpose throughout all the ages is one, ending in the ultimate consummation which God has decreed. This fact is stated in Heb. 1:2. Speaking of God as revealed in, and related to, the Son, it is written: "By whom he programmed the ages" (literal).

Such is the wonderful unity of the Scriptures throughout; but in no sense are the various systems regulating human conduct the same, and the exact application of these systems must be guarded at every point.

If truth for the children of God under grace is to be drawn from the teachings of the law of Moses, or the kingdom, it should be acknowledged that it is taken from a system foreign to grace, and that it is applicable only by way of illustration.

These governing principles differ in three particulars:

- (1) They present independent, sufficient, and complete systems of divine rule in the earth.
- (2) In these systems the order varies as to the sequence of the divine blessing and the human obligation.
- (3) These systems differ according to the degree in which the divine enablement has been provided.

I. They Present Independent, Sufficient, and Complete Systems of Divine Rule in the Earth

As has been stated, there are three of these systems of divine government.

- (1) The teachings of the law of Moses;
- (2) The teachings of grace; and

### (3) The teachings of the kingdom.

Naturally there is field here for wide expansion, since these three systems of authority occupy the major portion of the Bible. A brief review only of the essential character of these systems is here given:

#### (1) The Teachings of the Law of Moses.

This rule of life was revealed from God and accepted by Israel at Sinai, and was at no time addressed to the nations of the world. It was a peculiar form of government for a peculiar people, and accomplished a peculiar purpose in condemning the failure of man and in leading him to Christ. Its full detail is revealed in the writings of Moses; but the history of Israel under the law occupies the rest of the Old Testament, and the major part of the Gospels up to the record of the death of Christ. In the doctrinal teachings of the New Testament, very much additional light is given to the character and purpose of the law of Moses. There the law is held in contrast with the teachings of grace. There, also, as will be seen more fully in the later discussion, the law is represented as having passed out of force through the death of Christ; it may be observed, that, after the death of Christ, the law is in no instance treated as being directly in force.

The law of Moses was complete within itself. It was sufficient to regulate the conduct of an Israelite under every circumstance that might arise. No other rule of life had been revealed during the days in which the law of Moses was in effect, hence there was no temptation for Israel to complicate her governing principle with any other. In her relation to God, that nation remained for fifteen hundred years under pure law. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

#### (2) The Teachings of Grace.

Like the teachings of the law of Moses, the teachings of grace have not applied to people in all ages. These teachings were revealed from God through Christ and His apostles.

Moreover, they are never addressed to the world as applicable to it in the present age, but are addressed to a peculiar people who are in the world, but are not of the world. These teachings constitute the divine instruction to the heavenly citizen and unfold the exact manner of life that such a citizen is expected to manifest even here in the earth.

The full detail of this rule of life is found in portions of the Gospels, portions of the book of Acts, and in the Epistles of the New Testament.

As light is given in these particular Scriptures of the New Testament by way of contrast, concerning the character and purpose of the law of Moses, so, in like manner, the very foundations of grace and its relationships are laid in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament.

It is revealed that God dealt graciously with the human family from Adam to Moses; but it is also revealed that the precise form of divine government which is the present teaching of grace was not then disclosed, nor was it applied to people until the reign of the law had been terminated in the death of Christ. It is likewise revealed that the death of Christ was the necessary foundation for the present, full manifestation of super-abounding grace. It is equally as certain from revelation that the teachings of grace will apply to the children of God under grace as long as they are in the world, and these principles will cease to rule, of necessity, when the people to whom they alone apply are gathered out and taken from the earth at the coming of Christ.

This period between the death of Christ and His coming again is not characterized in the Scriptures as a time when the supreme purpose of God is the governing of the nations of the earth; this age is rather spoken of as "the times of the Gentiles" in all matters of human government in the earth.

Nor is this age the period in which God is realizing the fulfillment of His unchanging covenants with the nation Israel; that nation is now said to be scattered, peeled, blinded, broken off, and hated of all nations, and they are to remain so to the end of the age.

This age is not the time of the salvation of society; that great undertaking is clearly in the purpose of God, but it is reserved for the age which is yet to come. The present age is characterized by a unique emphasis on the individual. The death of Christ contemplated above all else the need of the individual sinner.

The gospel of grace, which the death of Christ made possible, is an appeal to the individual alone, and the very faith by which it is received is exercised only by the individual.

The message of grace is of

a personal faith,

a personal salvation,

a personal endowment of the Spirit,

a personal gift for service, and

a personal transformation into the image of Christ.

The company of individuals thus redeemed and transformed, are to be in the ages to come the supreme manifestation of the riches of God's grace. To this eternal purpose the whole universe was created and all ages have been programmed by God. The glory of this dispensation is lost to a large extent when the reign of the law is intruded into this age which followed the death of Christ, or when the social order of the kingdom, promised for a future age, is expected before the return of the King.

The Bible affords no basis for the supposition that the Lord will come to a perfected social order. At His coming He will gather the saved to Himself, but the wicked He will judge in righteousness. The transcendent glory of this age is that grace which will have been either accepted or rejected by the individual.

The teachings of grace are perfect and sufficient in themselves. They provide for the instruction of the child of God in every situation which may arise. There is no need that they be supplemented, or augmented, by the addition of precepts from either the law of Moses, or the teachings of the kingdom.

(3) The Teachings of the Kingdom.

The teachings of the kingdom have not been applied to people in all the ages; nay, more, they have not yet been applied to anyone.

Since they anticipate the binding of Satan, a purified earth, and the personal reign of the King, they cannot be applied until God's appointed time when these accompanying conditions on the earth have been brought to pass. The kingdom laws will be addressed to Israel and beyond them to all the nations who will

enter the kingdom. It will be the first and only universal reign of righteousness and peace in the history of the world.

One nation was in view when the law of Moses was in force in the earth; the individual is in view during this age of grace; and the whole social order of humanity will be in view when the kingdom is set up in the earth.

The reign of the King is never said to be ushered in by a gradual process of world improvement; it is introduced suddenly and with great violence.

The return of the King to rule is like a smiting stone, and will demolish the structure of world empires, will grind them to powder, and will scatter them as the wind scatters the chaff of the summer threshing floor (Dan. 2:31-45).

Satan and the satanic deception will have been removed from the earth,

Israel will have realized the glory of her covenants, and

the long predicted blessing will have come upon all the Gentiles, and upon creation itself.

The church is not once mentioned in relation to the teachings of the kingdom, nor are those teachings applied to her, for her part in the kingdom is not to be reigned over, but to reign with Christ--her Head. She, being the bride of the King, is His consort. She will still be under the heavenly teachings of grace, and her home will be in the bosom of the Bridegroom in the ivory palace of the King. The King will reign with a rod of iron. Sin and iniquity will be rebuked instantly and judged in perfect righteousness.

Clear conception of the glory of the kingdom is lost if it is confused with the age of grace which precedes it, or with the sinless new heavens and new earth of the eternal state which follows it. The kingdom closes with a demonstration of the failure of humanity and thus it adds the last message of the converging testimony to the wickedness of the fallen heart, and to the fact that in the exceeding grace of God alone is salvation.

The teachings of the kingdom are found in portions of the Psalms, the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament, and the kingdom teachings in the Synoptic Gospels. These teachings are complete and sufficient to direct the life of the children of the kingdom in every condition that may arise under the rule of the King. There is no need that these teachings be supplemented or augmented by additions from either of the other governing systems.

Under God's classification, there are only three major divisions of the human family--"The Jew, the Gentile and the church of God." Wherever they are mentioned in any portion of the Bible they are recognized as distinctly separate peoples, and it is important to follow the divine record concerning each from its beginning to its end.

The Jew, or Israel, began with Abraham, was favored in relationship to God above all the nations of the earth for fifteen hundred years in the Promised Land, is the object of all of Jehovah's purposes and covenants in the earth, is now as free from the law, and is as effectually shut up to the gospel of the grace of God as are the Gentiles, and will yet inherit the limitless blessings of all the kingdom covenants in the earth.

The Gentile began with Adam, received no direct instruction or covenant from Jehovah in all the ages past, is now the object of appeal, with the Jew, in the gospel of grace, and will share in the glory of the kingdom to come, when the divine blessing will be poured out on all the Gentiles (Acts. 15:17).

The church began with the death of Christ and the descent of the Spirit, is the divine objective in this age, is a heavenly people taken from both Jews and Gentiles, and will reign with the King as His bride in the ages to come.

Since there is so wide a difference in the character of these ages--of law, of grace, and of the kingdom--and in the peoples of the earth--the Jew, the Gentile, and the church--as they stand related to God throughout the ages, it is to be expected that there will be a variation in the divine government according to the essential character of the several ages. This is not only reasonable; it is the precise teaching of the Bible. Since these great governing systems are wholly separate and sufficient in themselves, and since there is much which is held in common in them all, a brief comparison of the systems is here undertaken:

#### A. The Similarity and Dissimilarity Between the Teachings of the Law of Moses and the Teachings of Grace

In this discussion, the law of Moses will be limited to the Decalogue; for no legalist proposes to carry forward into grace the judgments which governed the social life of Israel, or the ordinances which governed their religious ritual in the land. However, the moral commandments of the Decalogue are almost universally imposed upon the church by these legalists. In justification of this imposition, the plea is usually made that apart from the direct application of the Decalogue there could be no divine authority or government in the earth.

In no sense does this question involve the issues of world government; for God has never addressed either the teachings of the law, or the teachings of grace to the whole world.

The world has borrowed certain moral precepts from the Bible for its self-government; but it does not follow that God has accepted the world on the basis of the teachings of the law, or the teachings of grace. In reality, the world is shut up to the one appeal of the gospel of grace. Until this appeal is heeded, the individual is neither under law nor grace as a rule of life, but is "under sin,"

The issue is, therefore, between law and grace as governing principles in the life of the Christian. Must Christians turn to the Decalogue for a basis of divine government in their daily lives? Scripture answers this question with a positive assertion: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace."

If this be true, are the great moral values of the Decalogue discarded? By no means; for it will be seen that every moral precept of the Decalogue, but one, has been restated with increased emphasis in the teachings of grace. These precepts do not reappear under grace in the character and coloring of the law, but, rather, in the character and coloring of pure grace.

The following brief comparison will demonstrate the fact that the moral values of the law are reincorporated in the teachings of grace.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." 1. "We... preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God" (Acts 14:15).

2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image;... thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them."
2. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).
3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." 3. "But above all things brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath" (Jas. 5:12).
4. "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." 4. No such command is found in the teachings of grace.
5. "Honor thy father and thy mother." 5. "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Eph. 6:1).
6. "Thou shalt not kill." 6. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." 7. "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers... shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).
8. "Thou shalt not steal." 8. "Steal no more" (Eph. 4:28).
9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness." 9. "Lie not" (Col. 3:9).
10. "Thou shalt not covet." 10. "Coveteousness, let it not be named among you" (Eph. 5:3).

While some principles of the Mosaic law are restated under grace, those aspects of the law which are foreign to grace are omitted.

The command to keep the seventh day is omitted wholly. This fact and the reason thereof will be considered more at length later in the discussion. So, also, the one promise of the Decalogue is omitted. This promise occurs in connection with the precept concerning the obedience of children. It reads: "Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The fact that the law presented a promise to obedient children is pointed out in the New Testament (Eph. 6:1), with no inference that the promise is in effect now, but as a reminder of that which obtained under the law. It would be difficult for any individual, or child, in the church to establish a claim to a God-given land, or to demonstrate that any law now obtains by which long life is guaranteed to those who are now obedient to parents.

Again, concerning Israel and her relation to the land it is written:

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed";

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever";

"For the upright shall dwell in the land" (Ps. 37:3, 29; Prov. 2:21).

No land has been given to the Christian.

He is

a "stranger and pilgrim" here,

an "ambassador,"

a citizen of heaven.

If he is taught in the Scriptures, he is not looking for a long life here, but he is looking for the coming of his Lord. He is not clinging to this life, for "to depart, and to be with Christ,... is far better."

The serious manner in which people apply an Old Testament promise, impossible under grace, to themselves is a revelation of the measure of inattention with which the Scriptures are too often read and quoted. Since every adaptable precept of the law is restated in grace, it is not necessary to violate the Scriptures by forcing the law into the sphere of grace.

The Decalogue, in its moral principles, is not only restated in grace, but its principles are greatly amplified.

This is illustrated, again, by the same precept concerning the obedience of children. In the teachings of grace, the whole issue of obedience is taken up at length, and to this is added the instructions to parents as well.

Under the teachings of grace, the appeal of the first commandment is repeated no less than fifty times, the second twelve times, the third four times, the fourth (about the sabbath day) not at all, the fifth six times, the sixth six times, the seventh twelve times, the eighth six times, the ninth four times, and the tenth nine times.

Yet further, that which is even more vital should be noted:

The teachings of grace are not only gracious in character and of the very nature of heaven itself, but they are extended to cover the entire range of the new issues of the life and service of the Christian.

The Ten Commandments require:

no life of prayer,

no Christian service,

no evangelism,

no missionary effort,

no gospel preaching,

no life and walk in the Spirit,

no fatherhood of God,

no union with Christ,

no fellowship of saints,

no hope of salvation, and

no hope of heaven.

If it is asserted that we have all these because we have both the law and grace, it is replied that the law adds nothing to grace but confusion and contradiction, and that there is the most faithful warning in the Scriptures against this admixture.

A few times the teachings of the law are referred to by the writers of the Epistles by way of illustration. Having stated the obligation under grace, they cite the fact that this same principle obtained under the law. There is, however, no basis here for a commingling of these two governing systems.

The law of Moses presents a covenant of works to be wrought in the energy of the flesh; the teachings of grace present a covenant of faith to be wrought in the energy of the Spirit.

## B. The Similarity and Dissimilarity Between the Teachings of the Law of Moses and the Teachings of the Kingdom

As will be seen more fully further on, these two systems of divine government are both legal in character and order. If this is true, it is to be expected that there is much in common between them.

(1) They are similar because they are both based on a covenant of works.

(2) They are similar because of elements which are common to both.

(3) They are dissimilar because of certain points in which they differ.

1. They are similar because they are based on a covenant of works

The nature of a covenant which is based on human works is obvious. Whatever God promises under such a covenant is conditioned on the faithfulness of human beings. Every blessing under the law of Moses was so conditioned, and every blessing in the kingdom relationship will be found to be so ordered.

Turning to the kingdom teachings of Christ wherein the issues of personal conduct and obligation in the kingdom are taken up, it will be seen that all the kingdom promises to the individual are based on human merit. The kingdom blessings are reserved for the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemaker. It is a covenant of works only and the emphatic word is do.

"This do and thou shalt live," is the highest promise of the law. As people judge, so shall they be judged. A tree is approved or rejected by its fruits. And not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of "my Father" which is in heaven.

As the individual forgives, so will he be forgiven. And except personal righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, there shall be no entrance into the kingdom of heaven. To interpret this righteousness which is required to be the imputed righteousness of God is to disregard the teaching of the context, and to introduce an element which is not once found in this whole system of divine government.

The kingdom teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are concluded with the parable of the house built on the rock. The key to this message is given in the words, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them."

Turning to the law of Moses, we discover that it presents no other relation to God for the individual than this same covenant of works:

"And it shall come to pass, that if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day [including the Decalogue], that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on

thee, and overtake thee\_\_\_Blessed shalt thou be" (Deut. 28:1-14)

"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.... Cursed shalt thou be" (Deut. 28:15-68)

"Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12)

"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8)

"Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.... And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25-28)

By these references to the law of Moses and the law of the kingdom, it may be seen that both of these systems are based wholly on a covenant of works.

2. They are similar because of elements which are common to both

In the law of the kingdom, the Mosaic law is carried forward and intensified. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.... Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.... But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.... Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:17-28. Cf. Matt. 5:31-48; 6:1-18, 25-34).

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

By these illustrative passages it is clear that the law of Moses and the law of the kingdom are similar in that they contain elements which are common to both.

3. They are dissimilar because of certain points in which they differ

In the law of the kingdom, certain features are added which are not found in the law of Moses. These new features can be mentioned here only in part.

It has been revealed in the Scriptures above quoted that the law is intensified in the kingdom teachings. From these no element of the law of Moses has been subtracted. Rather, to the Mosaic revelation are added the kingdom teachings of Christ concerning marriage and divorce, the taking of an oath, and the personal obligation to others.

The law demanding "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is replaced by required submission. The other cheek is to be turned, the second mile is to be traveled, and to him that asketh, there is to be no refusal. Even the enemies are to be loved. These things are to be done "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven," and are only further evidences that in fact and force they issue from the

covenant of works.

There is a new appeal for sincerity in alms-giving, in prayer, and in fasting. There is a new revelation concerning prayer; but it is prayer for the kingdom and according to conditions in the kingdom alone. Special instruction is given concerning the use of riches in the kingdom and also concerning anxiety and care.

### C. The Similarity and Dissimilarity Between the Teachings of Grace and the Laws of the Kingdom

The importance of an unprejudiced consideration of these Scriptures which disclose the whole field of comparison between the teachings of grace and the laws of the kingdom cannot be too strongly emphasized. The theme is extensive, but an outline treatment only can be given here.

While this study of contrasts should be extended into all the kingdom teachings of the Gospels, the plan will be to follow a brief analysis of the manifesto of the King as recorded in Matthew chapters 5 to 7, and to compare the various precepts there revealed with the precepts given to the believer under grace.

It will be necessary, also, to compare these precepts with the kingdom teachings of the Old Testament; for it will be found that the teachings of the kingdom presented in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 are in exact accord with the Old Testament predictions regarding the kingdom, and are almost wholly in disagreement with the teachings of grace.

In Luke 16:16 it is written: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

The message of John the Baptist was something new. It was in no sense the preaching of the "law and the prophets" as a direct application of the Mosaic system. Nevertheless, his preaching was purely legal in character. An important exception to this is found in the gospel by John. In that gospel, the characterizing words, selected from all the sayings of John the Baptist are, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The gospel by John is distinctly of salvation and grace through believing, and the selection of this one message from John the Baptist beautifully illustrates the mind and purpose of the Spirit in the selection of material for the construction of that gospel of divine grace.

This exceptional word from John the Baptist, fitted to the message of grace in the gospel by John, should not be confused with his legalistic preaching as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, where his real ministry as the forerunner is set forth. What he preached, is clearly stated in Luke 3:7-14: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.... And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answered and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

The intense emphasis on the covenant of meritorious works is obvious in this message, but John did not preach Moses and the prophets.

The law and the prophets were until John. It is to be concluded that the preaching of John the Baptist was wholly new, and was according to his mission as herald of the King, but that message is legalistic, and not gracious. It is a covenant of works, and not a covenant of faith.

Added light is also given in Luke 16:16 as to the kingdom character of John's preaching. The divine rule in the earth which Matthew terms "the kingdom of heaven" is by Luke termed "the kingdom of God." This is justified since the kingdom of God includes the kingdom of heaven, or the earth-rule of the King.

Since Matthew and Luke are so evidently referring to the same divine rule in the earth, and often reporting the same message when employing these two phrases, it is conclusive that Luke's use of the term, "the kingdom of God," here, and elsewhere, is with reference to the limited divine rule in the earth. Into that kingdom, men who enter are said to be "pressing in." "To crowd oneself in," is the literal meaning, and the word suggests intense human effort, and implies the need of merit, which is required for entrance into the kingdom.

There are at least three major distinctions which will appear when the teachings of grace are contrasted with the teachings of the kingdom.

(1) In the kingdom message, hope is, in the main, centered in the kingdom of heaven, and, in Mark, and Luke, in that aspect of the kingdom of God which corresponds with the kingdom of heaven. This, it should be remembered, is not heaven; in this connection, it is the rule of the Messiah-King in the earth. However, the larger rule of the kingdom of God is mentioned once (Matt. 6:33), and at a point when all the divine interests are in view, and three times the kingdom message holds the anticipation of heaven itself before its children (Matt. 5:12; 6:20; 7:23). In the teachings of grace it is heaven itself which is in view, with never a reference to the kingdom of heaven, other than that the saints shall reign with the King. Christians, on the other hand, are often related to the larger sphere of the kingdom of God (See John 3:3).

(2) These two lines of teaching may be identified also by the use of the great words they employ. According to both the Old Testament and the New, righteousness and peace are the great words of the kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is the expansion of the full meaning of the personal righteousness which is required in the kingdom. The great words in this age are believe and grace. Not once do these words appear in connection with the kingdom teachings of Matthew chapters 5 to 7. Mercy is unfolded in grace, rather than in righteousness.

(3) The kingdom teachings, like the law of Moses, are based on a covenant of works. The teachings of grace, on the other hand, are based on a covenant of faith. In the one case, righteousness is demanded; in the other it is provided, both imputed and imparted, or inwrought. One is of a blessing to be bestowed because of a perfect life, the other is of a life to be lived because of a perfect blessing already received.

Too often it has been supposed that the kingdom reign of Messiah will be a period of sinlessness on the earth, corresponding to the new heavens and new earth which will follow. Every Scripture bearing on the kingdom emphasizes the moral conditions which will obtain in the kingdom. Because of the binding of Satan, and the immediate judgment for sin, the high moral requirements in the kingdom will be possible; but there will be evil to judge, the Enemy will persecute, and many who have professed will fail because they have not actually done the will of the King. So great will be the moral advance in world conditions in the kingdom over the present age that righteousness will then "reign"; while at the present time righteousness "suffers" (2 Tim. 3:12).

The various topics presented in the Sermon on the Mount are here considered in order:

#### 1. The Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12)

This kingdom message opens with the record of the ninefold blessing which is promised and provided for the faithful child of the kingdom. These blessings are won through merit. This is in sharp contrast to the blessings in the exalted position of the Christian to which he instantly attains through Christ at the moment he believes.

a) "Blessed are the poor in spirit [humble]: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." As the little child, "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

In the Old Testament vision of the coming manifestation of the King, it is said: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). To the Christian it is said: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind" (Col. 3:12).

These virtues are not put on by the Christian to gain heaven, much less the kingdom of heaven. They are put on because these elements of character belong to the one who is already "elect of God, holy and beloved." Christ is the pattern (Phil. 2:8), and God resists aught but humbleness of mind (Jas. 4:6). In the teachings of grace, "put on" does not mean to pretend, or assume; it is the manifestation of the life through the power of the Spirit (See Eph. 4:24; 6:11; Col. 3:12).

b) "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Mourning does not belong to the bride of Christ. To her a different message has been given: "Rejoice, and again I say, Rejoice."

Mourning is the portion of Israel until her King comes, and when He comes, it will be "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:2-3; Cf. Isa. 51:3; 66:13; 35:10; 51:11; Zech. 1:17).

c) "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Under grace, meekness is wrought in the believer by the Spirit, and is never rewarded; but the judgments of the King will be to "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isa. 11:4; Cf. Isa. 29:19; Zeph. 2:3; Ps. 45:4; 76:9).

The earth is to be inherited in the kingdom reign. The glory of the King will be in the earth. It could hardly be supposed that the meek are inheriting the earth now, or that this is any promise to the church, to whom no earthly promise is made. Those who are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, have an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven.

d) "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." The Christian may crave a closer walk with God, but he is already "made the righteousness of God in him." In distinction to this, righteousness is that quality which must be attained in the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory" (Isa. 62:1-2; Cf. Ps. 72:1-4; 85:10-11, 13; Isa. 11:4-5).

e) "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." The exact condition revealed in this promise should be carefully considered, for in this passage, mercy from God is made to depend wholly on the exercise of mercy toward others. This is pure law. Under grace the Christian is besought to be merciful, as one who has already obtained mercy (Eph. 2:4-5; Tit. 3:5).

The mercy of God will go forth in grace to the nation Israel when He gathers them into their own land (Ezek. 39:25); but He will, at the same time, deal with them as individuals by law: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). "Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward" (Ps. 18:24-26).

Under grace, He is rich in mercy, even when we were "dead in sins."

f) "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Upon concluding these observations concerning the nine beatitudes, attention should be given to the fact that, in contrast to the nine-fold, self-earned blessing of the kingdom, the believer under grace is to experience a nine-fold blessing which is produced in him by the direct power of the indwelling Spirit.

A careful comparison should be made of the nine-fold blessing which is promised under the kingdom, with the nine-fold blessing which is prepared under grace. It will be seen that all that is demanded under the law of the kingdom as a condition of blessing, is under grace, divinely provided.

The two aspects of life which are represented by these two groups of characterizing words are most significant. The total of all the blessings in the kingdom is not comparable with the superabundant "fruit of the Spirit"--"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-control]" (Gal. 5:22-23).

The very tense of the verb used is important. Under grace, the fruit of the Spirit is, which indicates the present possession of the blessing through pure grace; while under the kingdom, the blessing "shall be" to such as merit it by their own works.

## 2. The similitudes of the righteous in the kingdom (Matt. 5:13-16)

In this portion of Scripture the children of the kingdom are likened to the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. "Salt," as a figure, is not so used in the teachings of Moses or in the teachings of grace.

However, the Christian is said to be "light in the Lord," and is exhorted to "walk" as a child of the light (Eph. 5:8). Again, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5).

But, concerning Israel in her coming kingdom blessing, it is said:

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles";

"I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth";

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning"; "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising";

"The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 58:8; 60:3, 20).

Still another contrast appears in this connection: The Christian is appointed to manifest Christ (1 Pet. 2:9); but the children of the kingdom are appointed to manifest their good works (Matt. 5:16).

### 3. Christ interprets the law in its relation to the kingdom (Matt. 5:17-48)

This Scripture declares that the law shall not pass until it is fulfilled. This has to do with observance, for it is added: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments... shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." It is the law of Moses intensified. In so doing, Christ transfers the obligation from the outward act to the attitude of the heart. This intensifies, rather than relieves, its legal character. It carries with it the most scorching condemnation possible to law.

Opposed to this, and under grace it is written: "But we see Jesus," and "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:6).

In Christ, God now is revealed to the believer, while the kingdom promise to the pure in heart is that they shall see God. The kingdom promises continue:

"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly.... Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:15-18).

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3-4).

g) "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Peace is one of the two great words in the kingdom. The King who is "the Prince of Peace," shall so reign that righteousness and peace shall cover the earth as waters cover the face of the deep (Cf. Ps. 72:3, 7).

In that kingdom there will be special distinction given to the one who promotes peace. "They shall be called the children of God." Under grace; no one is constituted a child of God by any works whatsoever. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

h) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Again, the issue is righteousness. The Christian, on the contrary, suffers with Christ and for His sake, and his reward is in heaven. "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake" (John 15:21). "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

i) "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

The believer is called to suffer for Christ's sake:

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

It should be noted that when the children of the kingdom are compared to any class of people in suffering, they are taken back to prophets which were before them, and not to the saints who comprise the body of Christ.

The Christian is not under law. He has no "altar" other than Christ (Heb. 13:10). The altar is always related either to the Mosaic system, or to the coming kingdom, and is intensely legalistic in character. Concerning the kingdom it is said: "Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar" (Isa. 56:7; Cf. Isa. 60:7; Ezek. 43:13-27; Zech. 14:20).

The child of the kingdom must agree with his adversary quickly, lest he be cast into prison where there is no degree of mercy available (Matt. 5:25-26). To the child of God it is said: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:17-21).

The high standard of generous submission is, in the kingdom teachings, substituted in place of the exact equity of the law of Moses (Matt. 5:38-48). In place of the principle of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," the other cheek is to be turned, the cloak is to be added to the coat, the second mile is to be traveled, no goods are to be withheld from him who asks, and enemies are to be loved. This is not to be done as an expression of high position already received in grace; it is to be done meritoriously that "ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

Such relations between human beings will be required and practiced in the day when the King shall reign in righteousness and Satan is bound. The teachings of grace concerning murder, adultery, divorce, and swearing are all clearly stated in the Scriptures.

In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, the extreme legal penalty for wrongdoing is imposed (Matt. 5:20-22,29-30). Is any child of God under grace in danger of judgment, or the awful penalty of hell fire? Argument is uncalled for in the light of the Scriptures

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24)

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man [created thing] pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1)

It is quite true that believers will be judged by Christ as to the character of their lives and service, that the Father chastens every son whom He receives, and that the apostle Paul suggested that he might visit a certain church with a rod; but how different is all this from the penalty of hell fire which is unconditionally imposed on the children of the kingdom because of their sin! How imperfectly believers realize, when they turn from grace, the awful penalties of the law and the meaning of eternal damnation!

How precious, too, that such ignorance of the law does not change the abiding, divine covenant of grace into which the believer has been brought through faith in Christ!

#### 4. Mere externalism rebuked (Matt. 6:1-7,16-18;7:21-29)

In the kingdom, a spirit of vain show as the actuating motive in alms-giving, offering of prayer, and professions of devotion will be judged instantly. On the other hand, these things, if done in secret, will be rewarded "openly." Such recompense should not be confused with the rewards for service which are promised the Christian at the judgment seat of Christ. Humble faithfulness in the kingdom will receive its immediate recognition from the King.

#### 5. Prayer for the kingdom, and in the kingdom (Matt. 6:8-17; 7:7-11)

What is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," but what is, in reality, the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples when contemplating the kingdom, is not intended to be a ritual prayer. He said "After this manner therefore pray ye."

The prayer is directly concerned with the issues of the coming kingdom. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Of the great themes mentioned in this model kingdom prayer, but one is taken up for special comment and emphasis. It is as though the Spirit of God was seeking to save the reader from any confusion at this point. This special comment amplifies the one petition: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." The divine comment on this reads: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

This, again, is purely legal. Forgiveness on the part of the Christian is enjoined, but it is enjoined in agreement with the exalted principle of grace:

"Tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you";

"Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Cf. 1 John 1:9).

The legal character of this great kingdom prayer should not be overlooked because of sentimental reasons growing out of early training.

Attempts have been made to relate this divine forgiveness, which is conditioned on a forgiving attitude of the sinner, with the Father's present forgiveness toward the believer who is under grace. Such an interpretation is as foreign to the precise relationships which belong to grace as it would be if the passage were said to teach the present divine forgiveness of the unsaved.

Present forgiveness for both the unsaved and the saved is a matter of pure grace, and the divine conditions which are imposed are in perfect harmony with this fact.

In this age, the unsaved are forgiven as a part of the entire accomplishment in salvation on the one condition that they believe (Eph. 4:32), and the saved are forgiven on the one condition that they confess (1 John 1:9). These two words do not represent meritorious works; they represent the simple adjustment of the heart to that which is already provided in the grace of God. The Cross has changed things for all. A covenant purely of law-works is stated in the passage in question. Such a covenant is the very foundation of all kingdom teaching, but it is wholly foreign to the teachings of grace.

Christ, as some claim, must not be presented as a stern, austere ruler. The marvel is that He is ever anything else. God's holiness is not subject to gracious leniency toward sin. Apart from the cross where

redemption's price has been fully paid, there could be nothing but the consuming fire of judgment; but, since God in infinite love has provided a Substitute, there is boundless grace.

In this age, God is dealing with people on the ground of His grace as it is in Christ. His dealings with people in the coming age are based on a very different relationship. At that time, the King will rule with a rod of iron. There is no word of the Cross, or of grace in the kingdom teachings. This prayer is, by its own expression, a kingdom prayer.

The whole basis of appeal in this prayer, as in Matt. 7:7-11, is the faithfulness of the Father to His children in the kingdom.

The basis of appeal in prayer during the days before Christ, or under Moses, was the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenants.

The basis of appeal in prayer under grace is that of the believer's present union and identification with Christ.

Access is provided only through Christ (Heb. 10:19-20), and the new argument of appeal in prayer is in the name, and for the glory, of Christ. Long after He had taught His disciples the kingdom form of prayer, and after He had turned to the teachings of pure grace He said: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

The kingdom form of prayer omits every feature of the essential note of prevailing prayer under grace.

#### 6. The law governing riches in the kingdom (Matt. 6:19-24)

The right use of riches, as under grace, will be rewarded in heaven, and there is no compromise: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

#### 7. The Father's care over the children of the kingdom (Matt. 6:25-34)

This portion of the Scriptures is one of surpassing sweetness. As God clothes the lilies of the field, so will He clothe those who rest in Him by faith; but here His care is only for such as seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, while, under grace, His care is unconditioned by any human work or merit:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you";

"Be careful for nothing" (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6).

The same principle of divine care was presented under the law of Moses, but in the form of pure law: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22).

#### 8. Warning against judgment of others (Matt. 7:1-6)

This kingdom law is unyielding: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." One under grace has passed beyond all judgment, by virtue of his acceptance in Christ who died for him (John 5:24). He may be chastened by his Father, which is a form of judgment (1 Cor. 11:27-32), but such judgment is never said to be the return of his own sin back upon his own head, as is prescribed in this portion of the kingdom

teaching.

#### 9. Warnings against false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20)

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." The warning here is against false prophets who are to be discerned by the quality of their lives. The warning to the children of God under grace is against false teachers who are to be discerned by their doctrine concerning Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; 2 John 7-11): never by their lives; for outwardly, false teachers are said to appear as the "ministers of Christ," and to be directly under the power of Satan who himself appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). The attractive personality of the false teacher affords great advantage as a background for the appeal he makes for his doctrine.

#### 10. Three determining statements concerning the kingdom

a) "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Exposition is unnecessary concerning this passage. It is the foundation of all the demands for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It should in no wise be confused with the believer's entrance into heaven through the finished work of Christ: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5).

b) "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). This passage stands as a conclusion of the whole appeal of this kingdom teaching. It is as a key to all that has gone before. The legal principle, restated in this passage, is not said to be any part of the teachings of grace; it is rather "the law and the prophets."

c) "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). Under the conditions laid down in the kingdom teachings, life is entered by a personal faithfulness (Matt. 5:29-30; 18:8-9; Luke 10:25-28). When this same exhortation is stated in the gospel by Luke (Luke 13:24), it opens with the words, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The word strive is a translation of agonizomai, which means "to agonize." It suggests the uttermost expenditure of the athlete's strength in the contest. Such is the human condition that characterizes all the kingdom passages which offer entrance into life. An abrupt change is met when turning to the gospel by John, which was written to announce the new message of grace, which is, that eternal life may be had through believing. No two words of Scripture more vividly express the great characterizing relationships in law and grace than agonize, and believe. Grace is the unfolding of the fact that One has agonized in our stead, and life is "through his name," and not by any degree of human faithfulness, or merit.

There is a dangerous and entirely baseless sentiment abroad which assumes that every teaching of Christ must be binding during this age simply because Christ said it. The fact is forgotten that Christ, while living under, keeping, and applying the law of Moses, also taught the principles of His yet future kingdom, and, at the end of His ministry and in relation to His cross, He also anticipated the teachings of grace.

If this threefold division of the teachings of Christ is not recognized, there can be nothing but confusion of mind and consequent contradiction of truth.

Again, it is not unreasonable to recognize that these kingdom teachings should directly apply to a yet future age. The Bible is the one revelation from God to all peoples of all the ages. It is not difficult to understand that much of the Scripture applies to conditions which are now wholly in the past; nor should it be difficult to understand that some of the Scripture applies to conditions which are wholly of the future. How else shall we know of the future? Certain revelations are of the coming tribulation period and are in no sense applicable to the present time. Who has ever prayed that his sight should not be on a sabbath day? Yet Christ commanded that prayer to be prayed (Matt. 24:20).

In like manner, the use of the word "whosoever" in Matt. 7:24 does not imply that all the people of all the ages are addressed. It is more reasonable to believe that it applies to the people living under the conditions of the period which the passage describes. The all-inclusive word he is used by Christ when He said, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13); but nothing could be more contradictory to the teachings of grace than the principle set forth in this passage. There will be a salvation in the tribulation for those who endure its trials to the end. Under grace, the believer endures because he is saved. If the word "whosoever" in Matt. 7:24 includes those who are saved by grace, then they have been thrust into the blasting covenant of works which that passage proposes, and grace is wholly sacrificed.

Thus it may be concluded that the teachings of the law, the teachings of grace, and the teachings of the kingdom are separate and complete systems of divine rule which are perfectly adapted to the varied conditions in three great dispensations. The teachings of Moses and the teachings of the kingdom are purely legal, while the instructions to the believer of this dispensation are in conformity with pure grace. There is much that is held in common within all these rules for conduct, but this is no justification for their admixture. All that in the law appertains to life under grace is preserved and restated from the law in the great injunctions and beseechings of grace.

To transgress these bounds is to frustrate grace, and to complicate the individual with the system of law in such a manner as to make him a debtor to do the whole law. The law cannot be broken or divided. It stands as a unit. To undertake any part of it is to be committed to it all. Nothing could be more unreasonable or more unscriptural, than to borrow some portions from the law system, either that of Moses, or of the kingdom, and, at the same time, reject other portions. He who will choose the law must, to be consistent, do the whole law (Rom. 10:5), and if he shall break it at one point, he is guilty of all (Jas. 2:10).

How precious are the riches of grace in Christ Jesus! How sweet and fitting to the child of God in grace are the heavenly beseechings of grace!

## II. The Order Varies As to the Sequence of the Divine Blessing and the Human Obligation

The second major distinction between the teachings of law and the teachings of grace is seen in the varying order between the divine blessing and the human obligation. This variation is found to exist when the principle of grace is compared with the principle of law in any form of the law whatsoever. It is equally true of the law of Moses, the law of the kingdom, or, when legally stated, of the larger conception of the law as being the whole revealed will of God.

When the human obligation is presented first, and the divine blessing is made to depend on the faithful discharge of that obligation, it is of and in conformity with pure law.

When the divine blessing is presented first, and the human obligation follows, it is of and in conformity with pure grace.

The varying orders under law and grace may be stated in the words "do and live": or "live and do". In the case of the law, it is do something with a view to being something; in the case of grace, it is be made something with a view to doing something. Is the Christian who is under grace saved and kept by good works, or is he saved and kept unto good works? The law said, "If you will do good, I will bless you"; grace says, "I have blessed you, now do good." Under the law, one lives well to become accepted of God; under grace one lives well since it becomes one to live well who is already accepted.

The law presents first a human work to be done; grace always presents first a divine work to be believed.

Law begins with the question as to what one ought to do; grace begins with the question as to what God has already done.

Every word of the law revelation is thus made to be a conditional covenant of human works; while every word of the grace revelation is made to be an unconditional covenant of divine works.

The instructions given to Israel under Moses, and the instructions proposed for the government of the yet future kingdom in the earth, are purely legal in their character. The farewell word of Moses to Israel as recorded in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy is the crystallization of the whole law of Moses.

One passage is the heart of this message:

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be.... But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be" (Deut. 28:1-68).

Every teaching of the kingdom which contemplates the responsibility of the individual is, in like manner, based on a covenant of human works, and is, therefore, purely legal in character. This may be observed in all the kingdom teachings of the Old Testament, and the kingdom teachings of the New Testament. Grace is extended to the nation when, apart from all merit, she is placed in her land, and restored to divine blessing; but the rule of the King will be on the basis of pure law, and the responsibility of the individual to that rule necessarily will be in conformity to the same. Beyond what has gone before in the discussion, this fact will need but a passing illustration from the kingdom teachings of the New Testament:

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth";

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy";

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven";

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespass

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