

The Ten Basic Steps: Step #9: Exploring the Old Testament

Lesson 4-Law and Grace

Objective: To understand our inability to keep the law and our need for God's grace.

Read: Galatians 3

Memorize: Romans 6:23

1. The Law
2. What the Law Does
3. Grace
4. Life Application

In God's holy Word, the Law of Moses and God's grace are constantly set in contrast.

Under the Law, God demanded righteousness from man. The Law was connected with works.

Under grace, God in Christ gives righteousness to man, and that righteousness becomes ours by faith (John 1:17; Ephesians 2:8,9).

By the Law we have knowledge of sin (Romans 7:7,8; Galatians 3:19). Paul said, "I felt fine so long as I did not understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die" (Romans 7:9, TLB).

Paul laments that, because of his sinful nature, he constantly struggles with wrongdoing. "I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me...Oh what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?" (Romans 7:22-25).

This is the struggle of every child of God apart from His grace, which through Jesus Christ delivered us from the guilt imposed by the Law and the bondage created by our sins. Paul said, "Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free" (verse 25).

While Jesus presents the ultimate portrait of God's grace, one cannot fail to see a full gallery of His mercy in the stories of the Old Testament. It is evident from the struggles of man under the Law that deliverance could come only by His mercy and grace. Thus we have a balance between God's judgment of sin and His means of restoration for those who truly trust and obey Him.

The Law

When the "Law" is mentioned, the thing that most commonly comes to mind is the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20 and are repeated in Deuteronomy 5. They are as follows:

- You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything.
- You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
- Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet...anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Jesus condensed these ten into two in Matthew 22:37-40. What are they?

What was James' pronouncement concerning the seriousness of breaking even one of these laws (James 2:10)?

What the Law Does

Read Deuteronomy 29:29 and 30: 11-20.

The Law of Moses was a covenant of works. God said, "You shall" and "You shall not." The laws were definite, and the attached penalties were definite if the conditions were not obeyed.

Webster defines law as "a rule of conduct or action prescribed by the supreme governing authority and enforced by a sanction." Law always implies two things: a standard and a penalty.

These laws were presented as God's standard of righteousness for that time. They were literally a yardstick for man. The New Testament reveals that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Jesus Christ came to "fulfill the law," and now God's standard of righteousness is Christ Himself.

How are God's people to respond to the things He has revealed of Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29; 30:11,19)?

Briefly, what is the summary of all the Law? (Deuteronomy 30:16,20)

How did Jesus Christ summarize the will of God for man in Mark 12:29-31?

On the basis of Matthew 5:17, what do you think was Christ's assessment of the Law?

Read Romans 3:19-26. What does the Law reveal? To what did the Law bear witness while failing to reveal it fully? (verse 21) How has a full revelation been made to us? (verses 22-24)

Grace

The Living Bible translation of Romans 3:19-26 will help you understand God's grace. As you read the following passage, underline the words that have special meaning to you.

The judgment of God lies very heavily upon the Jews, for they are responsible to keep God's laws instead of doing all these evil things; not one of them has any excuse; in fact, all the world stands hushed and guilty before Almighty God. Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners.

But now God has shown us a different way to heaven - not by "being good enough" and trying to keep his laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says he will accept and acquit us - declare us "not guilty" - if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins.

For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath. In this way he was being entirely fair, even though he did not punish those who sinned in former times. For he was looking forward to the time when Christ would come and take away those sins. And now in these days also he can receive sinners in this same way, because Jesus took away their sins.

Compare Romans 3:20 with Ephesians 2:8-9 and write your conclusions.

How does keeping the Law make a person feel? Should living under grace make you more eager to obey God or less? Why?

Life Application

How would you explain the difference between Law and grace to someone who was depending upon his own good works to please the Father?

What is Christ's relationship to the following: Law? Grace?

What is your relationship to the following: Law? Grace?

What difference will an understanding of Law and grace make in your desire to please God?

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