

Grace vs the law (an idea that can tear a church apart).

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Introduction

Many people increasingly have short attention spans and my analytics tells me that for example they watch only about 4- 5 minutes of my *YouTube* content. Strange as many videos are about 20 minutes. I have learnt that it's not wise to rush God's things so slow down and let him speak to you gently, you are after all stepping onto very Holy ground and in fact today's topic was so hot over 500 years ago, it is part of what caused the Reformation – where Protestants split from the Catholic church.

If you were to start reading the bible from the beginning, you would find all sorts of interesting and perhaps crazy stories in the first two books called "Genesis" and "Exodus". You might for example encounter:

- **Abel.** The first "martyr". In Genesis 4, the story shows that he was killed by his brother Cain who was jealous that Abel had found favour with God.
- **Enoch.** It shows in Genesis 5: 24 that God "took him away". This man never died!
- **Abraham.** He lied to Egypt's Pharaoh that his wife Sarah was his sister (*Gen 12: 14-20*); Had a son, Ishmael with his wife's slave Hagai (*Gen 16: 1-4*); His Nephew Lot slept with his own two daughters, while drunk (*Gen 19: 30 – 36*) – Moabites and Ammonites resulted from this; but through this all, Abraham proved faithful to God by being willing to kill with a knife, as a sacrifice to God, his son of promise, Isaac (*Gen 22: 1-18*).

Interesting indeed, but the bible is a full spectrum because, you then eventually hit a wall of "dry instructions" in a book called "Leviticus". Not many stories, lies or controversy, just mainly instructions from God

Such as this one on sacrifices:

The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When anyone among you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord. You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. You are to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Leviticus 1: 1-5

Or this one on purification after child birth:

The Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as



during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding. Leviticus 12: 1 – 5

The book of Leviticus can leave you puzzled. For example, in the above passages.

- Why slaughter a “poor innocent animal” to take away the sins of a human being? Why must the animal have no defects? Didn’t God create all things? Is he discriminating against the animals with defects?
- Why is a woman “purified” after 40 days when she gives birth to a son yet is “purified” after 80 days, twice the time when she gives birth to a daughter? Is the bible sexist? What does it mean to be “unclean anyway”?

I am telling you this so that I can introduce you to the very interesting topic called “Grace vs. the law”. In it I will explore:

- What the word “law” and the word “grace” mean when you encounter them in the bible or in conversations with “Church people”.
- The reasons why God gave laws – such as the one on purification which seemed bad or even difficult to keep.
- The common that runs through all those who are saved from the beginning of time to present.

Part 1: Explaining the law

Qn 1: When the bible says “the law” what does it mean?

There are hundreds of commands given to the Israelites, but the phrase “the law” refers specifically to the compilation of decrees found in the first five books of the Bible. These five books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This whole body of law was given the name “Torah”.ⁱ

So, what you will have in essence is the 10 commandments and then many other commands given to the Israelites. Some scholars say there were over 613 commandmentsⁱⁱ!

When any aspect of the law was broken, sacrifices were required and penalties were prescribed. This is typically covered in the book of Leviticus.

Why did God give all these laws? He told them the reason:

“Be Holy Because I am Holy” Leviticus 11: 44 – 45.

The purpose of the laws was therefore in order that they could be Holy, like God who was in their midst - as the tent of God’s presence was in the midst of the camp, on the way to the promised land, and later the temple at Jerusalem when they eventually settled in the promised.

Qn. #2: Can God give people laws that are so difficult they can’t be kept?

Yes!

“So I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live;” Ezekiel 20: 25

So there is a possibility God can give people laws, knowing they will not keep them, more so, knowing they are not even good!

Qn. #3: Why was the law really given?

God gave the Law for a number of reasons. The core ones are this:

1. To reveal His standard of absolute righteousness to convict us all of our true guilt before Him, so that we would see our need for the gospel.

James 2:10 points out, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”*

When you tell people that they have sinned against the holy God, you will often hear, “God knows that I’ve done the best that I could. I believe in the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. I try to live by the Sermon on the Mount.” They seem to think that if you try to do your best, even if you fail thousands of times, God will let you off on judgment day. He will reward your effort, not penalize your failures. ⁱⁱⁱ

God gave us the 10 commandments and the whole system of laws, so we could see that it is impossible to be Holy like he is on our own – we therefore need a saviour and if you don’t need accept the saviour, the law becomes the basis on which you stand guilty before him. The bible says it like this:

so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. Romans 3: 19 – 20.

2. In order to reveal his grace and mercy available to us through Jesus

First, we see that Hebrews 10: 4 explains that:

“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

It means that everyone who made sacrifices under the Law was “wasting their time so to speak”. The only reason the blood was taking away sins of some and not others would have been because of faith – not the blood itself. The bible says:

“See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness”. Habakkuk 2: 4.

So, the ones who made sacrifices of bulls and goats in true repentance in the heart were forgiven, for they were really those who “looked through” the blood of the goats, right to God, the one who is faithful to forgive and gives righteousness – and it is these who obtained forgiveness, because in reality they were putting their faith in Jesus and the cross, even if they didn’t know it fully. This is how Abraham was saved by Jesus, even before Jesus had come – in faith – he looked forward!

This is why for example, about Moses who lived about 1,500 years before Jesus, Hebrews 11 says:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. Hebrews 11: 24 – 26

This is therefore how everyone in Hebrews 11, in the “hall of fame” was saved by Jesus – the lamb who was slain “from the beginning of the world” because faith is EVER PRESENT – at the time of Abel, Enoch and Abraham and at the time of Moses and the law.

All these heroes, experienced real change on the inside and rituals such as sacrificing a bull was simply a symbol or an outward sign of the internal change – just like baptism today, an outward sign of the internal death and resurrection of a believer.

Romans 3 explains this whole concept clearly as follows:

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in[a] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,[b] through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Romans 3: 21 – 27 (NIV).

We can clearly see that right from the old testament to today, anyone who gets saved, is saved by faith – through accepting the grace of God. This is the mystery of salvation.

By the way, it is said that it is this passage of scripture is what gave Martin Luther the courage to stand up to the Catholic church and say, justification is by faith and faith alone, without works. This is passage is what led to the reformation and eventually what partially led to all the different protestant denominations including the Pentecostals you see today! So, you are indeed on Holy ground.

Part 2: What then is grace?

Many verses explain grace but in summary, Grace is really the acceptance of the free gift of God of salvation, so to speak, accepting his mercy, his “grace” from the curse of the Law, which we would fall under.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Galatians 3: 10 – 14.

It means anyone who lives under “grace” cannot live under the law – because the two are contrary. The one under grace walks by faith, but the law is not based on faith. It is this same amazing grace that is good news to some – it allows people who might never have had a chance to know about Jesus (such as Abel and Enoch), even perhaps today to still get to heaven – through this same faith and grace of God but the reverse is also true – it is how God will judge people, even those who never heard of Jesus – but lived wickedly (such as those in the days of Noah, perhaps even today). The bible says this:

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Romans 2: 13 – 16 (NIV).

The good news of the gospel is however this: Jesus came, took the curse – that was ours – that is amazing grace, and then freed us, so we can live by faith.

The Grace of God also elevates us, from what would have been servants or slaves to sons (this applies to both women and men). The bible says this:

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces[a] of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.[b] Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba,[c] Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4: 1 – 7

The law therefore came as a form of “guardian” until Jesus came. When he came, he released us and gave us the right of becoming heirs – so we could have the same rights as him, calling God our father, when previously we would have said “Master”.

It is by faith that Enoch skipped death. By faith that Joseph foresaw the exodus. By faith, Moses the lawgiver saw another Prophet coming – this Prophet being Christ. By faith Ezekiel saw God giving us a heart of flesh. By Faith – Stephen when dying asked God to forgive them, one of these being Paul whose Romans passage gave Martin Luther the faith to start the reformation. Before the law was given, people lived by faith. Moses the law giver, lived by faith, after the law, the Apostles of Christ, lived by Faith, Jesus himself, lived by faith. If all these lived by faith, why then are you trying to live by legalism – by the law? As Paul would say: “You Foolish Galatians – who has bewitched you?”^{iv}

I said this before, but I say it again: the just have always lived by faith, not by the law, so you must live by faith. That is amazing grace!

Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- You are a believer but the faith journey has worn you out. You need the Lord’s help to be return to his amazing grace.
- You used to be a believer, but are a prodigal son/daughter. Nevertheless, the Lord is calling you back, saying “the just shall live by faith”
- You have never received the gift of Christ, being eternal life and neither have you received his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who gives you his grace – his salvation, but the rebellious, will have their own hearts judge them, on the day of judgment.

Write to me so I can pray further for you: dwasake@shaweleroad.com Be blessed. END.

Next steps

- Visit our website which shows the steps it takes to get to know Jesus and be saved from this wicked generation.

<https://www.shaweleroad.com/what-must-i-do-to-get-saved>

Information notice board

- 1) **About me.** Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life being a hedonist – one who seeks pleasure for the sake of it, yet Love also brought pain! Since God humbled me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017, he has enabled me to experience his amazing grace and to live by the Holy Spirit. You can read my full testimony [here](#):
- 2) **About these series.** The Lord Jesus gave me a single word “Go” as I was praying for a word for this season and series. This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church in order to fulfil the “Great Commission”. This lesson is one of those messages.
- 3) **Pray for us!** Without the Lord, our effort is in vain. Pray that we remain faithful, humble servants.
- 4) **Subscribe to** our [YouTube Channel](#) and keep up with our videos which support the website.
- 5) **Looking for a ministry to partner with (pray, volunteer, give, subscribe to)?**

<http://www.mutundwechristianfellowship.org/>

Established in 1992, Mutundwe Christian Fellowship had its inception as a home cell that congregated every Friday evening in a home garage. This was spearheaded by Pastor Tom Balaba Mugerwa and five of his other colleagues who had a common spiritual calling of restoring God’s Kingdom on earth and preparing the perfect church of Christ for eternity.

Notes

ⁱ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/bible-faqs/in-the-bible-we-read-about-the-law-what-does-this-mean/>

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments#:~:text=The%20Jewish%20tradition%20that%20there,recorded%20in%20Talmud%20Makkot%2023b.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-why-god-gave-law-romans-319-20>

^{iv} See Galatians 3: 1