



LAW vs. GRACE



By Dr. Henry Harbuck, AEGA President

World renowned evangelist, Billy Graham, often began his crusades by briefly quoting from an old hymn: “*Jesus loves me; this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*” This is a magnificent confession of what the Bible says about grace. Though we may fail, God’s abiding love never fails!

Without realizing it, many Christians still rigidly follow some form of Old Testament Law. These same believers reject the New Testament doctrine of grace believing it makes them appear “soft” or “weak.” This belief often prevails among holiness groups who accept nothing less than human perfection from the point a person is saved.

Paul said in Romans 3:20-24: **v.20** - “...no human being can be brought into a place of justification (*right standing*—some Greek scholars say *God’s righteousness*) by the works of the Law. For all the Law can do is to make human beings aware of their sin. **v.21** - But now it has come to light that a righteous God has given human beings a way of having right standing with Him. It is a way that is not prescribed by the Law, but is attested to by the [scrolls of the] Law and the Prophets. **v.22** – God’s righteousness comes to all human beings who believe [in Christ and have faith in Him]. **v.23** – For everyone has sinned [and missed the mark], and are falling short of the glory of God—[that is, the honor bestowed by Him], **v.24** – being *made righteous* (literally – *justified*) as a gift by His grace (love), provided by the *priestly/sacrificial atonement* of Christ Jesus to make them free [from sin].” (*Note: Missing the mark is in the Greek aorist tense and is essentially the same as the English past tense as listed above. And “falling” is the Greek present imperative tense.*) If this is true, then how will we be approved or *be made righteous* by God? It is by His grace!

The above-mentioned Scripture, penned by the apostle Paul, is the most masterful explanation of *grace* ever written. Yet, this masterpiece is virtually ignored and/or misunderstood by a large majority of Christians. The truth is, “You don’t have the wherewithal to be considered pure and clean by your deeds; only by God’s grace is this made possible.” As I often say, “*The Law gets you going, but grace keeps you going.*”

Romans and Hebrews are the most neglected books of the Bible. Why? It takes much intensive study to understand these books and to teach them. They both speak of *grace*.

The following outline provides a better understanding of Grace:

I – The Law Cannot Justify Us (Heb. 11:8)

Word processing programs justify words and sentences automatically so the typist doesn’t have to be frustrated with alignment. In like fashion, this is what God does for us: *He lines us up properly so we both look better and become better.*

Grace is most often misunderstood. Worldwide, there is a tendency for human beings to believe that fol-

lowing a prescribed code of law will give them “peace and illumination,” and that eventually “right standing” with their God (or gods) will come about. People today search the world over seeking “peace and love,” never realizing that all these things are found in Christ.

Cults rely on codes [of law] to please God. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, and the Oneness” Pentecostals all fall into this category because their doctrines are based firmly on “works” and not “grace.”

World religions rely on codes [of law] to find peace with their god (or gods). Though many world religions trust in some code of law to give them peace, the three major ones are mentioned here:

Hinduism: For the Hindu, the path to salvation wherein one may experience release, deliverance, emancipation, and liberty is found in *moksha*. This means to rid one’s life of something felt to be undesirable; and is done through a cycle of rebirth. It indicates an expanded view, a sense of calmness and security; and carries the notion of attaining a goal, or grasping the power “to be” and “to do.”

Buddhism: Like Hindus, the Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and in the law of *karma* – i.e., of cause and effect. Buddha taught it is possible to abolish *bad karma* and to find liberty from its grip by reorientation of life. Thereafter, a new process begins, which is called *good karma*. A good Buddhist always follows the teaching of Siddharta Gautama, who became “the Buddha” (the enlightened one), born in modern day Nepal, once a part of India. The Buddha’s Eightfold Path is: right knowledge, right attitude, right speech, right action, right living (for an occupation), right effort, right mindfulness, and right composure.

Islam: This religion requires strict obedience to all its law in order to be a “good Muslim.” Founded by Mohammed, Islam uses exclusively the codes and laws found in the the Qur’an (English—*Koran*), which Mohammed claimed were given directly to him by Allah (God). To the western world, one of the most unusual and puzzling doctrines of Islam is *Jihad*. This is the belief that Muslims are called to wage war against evil forces that hinder Islam from advancing, thus bringing the non-Muslim world under the dominance of Islam.

Remember: Grace is never taught or accepted by either the World Religions or the (so-called) Christian Cults.

II – The Law Cannot Make Us Righteous—Clean and Holy - (Gal. 3:11-12)

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place where he was to receive an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

The prophet of old has said, “Your righteousness is as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). This statement, which should cause each of us to pause and think seriously, is virtually ignored in the Christian holiness denominations. Though holiness groups believe this is a state one must strive for; it cannot, in point of fact, be humanly achieved by anyone. Why? Because this is only accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit within us. Interestingly, when one is lacking in holiness, he or she often appears (on the outside) to be more holy than they really are.

John Wesley, an early church pioneer, highly esteemed by most Christians, once said: “I believe that absolute sanctification is possible, but I cannot achieve it.” So, what is the greatest proof of holiness? Is it proved by how much you may read the Bible? Or by how well you apply Christian principles in everyday life? During the times of Christ, the Law demanded adherence to 680 rules and regulations in order

to justify (or make righteous) one before Jehovah (Yahweh—*God*). These rules were nothing more than a “yoke” (or burden) to the Jewish people, which most of them could not follow perfectly in order to please God.

III – The Law Cannot Replace Faith (*Galatians 3:11; 3-14*)

The promise of the Spirit is by faith (Gal. 3:14). In the Old Testament, the languages of the people were “confused” (Genesis 11:9) at the Tower of Babel. In the New Testament, the languages of the people seeking God (Acts 2:6) were “infused” at Jerusalem.

The Bible says. “...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that is, freedom and not bondage” (2 Corinthians. 3:17). Now, this applies to what I am saying. The Spirit of the Lord is not manifest because someone speaks in tongues or shouts “Hallelujah!” But those who have the testimony of the Holy Spirit know beyond doubt that they have been freed from the bondage of sin, and by God’s grace, will complete their course on earth.

Faith also brings unity (Psalm 133:1). When brothers and sisters dwell together in unity and harmony, the Spirit of God dwells in their midst, because God hates anything among His people that brings disunity or discord.

Returning to find the Galatians again under the Law [of bondage], Paul (who had previously taught them about grace) exclaimed, “O you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched [that is, *mesmerized—or deluded*] you, and caused you to follow [again] the Law [by casting a spell over you? Gal. 3:1]” They had once again reverted to arguing about holy days, holy foods, holy clothing, holy living, and holy swearing. Though much may be said today about “holy living” (which is pleasing to God); legalism is of little value, and puts people under bondage and slavery. People don’t *need* to perform “good deeds” to be saved, but they *will* perform “good deeds” when they *are* saved.

In conclusion, I am convinced the Bible teaches that *grace* is simply trusting in God’s *love* to run the race of faith. Even though we may fall away and hurt ourselves and others, through confession and obedience to His word, we are given another chance. This is GRACE in its purest form! You may feel like a loser when you fall away, but a real winner will rise to the occasion and try... try...try again.

Dr. Harbuck is the international president/overseer of the AEGA Fellowship. He is also an author, teacher, conference speaker, educator, and an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. Currently he is authoring a new Bible entitled: “The New Millenia In-depth Bible.” He desires your prayers to complete this unique Bible for the glory of God.

