

MY BIBLE SCHOOL

LESSONS

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #1: What the Bible Says About: "Obedience Through Christ"

SCRIPTURE READING: ROMANS 5:20; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:34 COLOSSIANS 2:6, 20 EPHESIANS 2:8-10

Memory Verse: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" John 1:12.

INTRODUCTION

Law and grace are closely associated in the plan of redemption. To understand the operation of grace, we must know something about the operation of both law and grace.

In the beginning, Jesus Christ created man. Man was upright (*Genesis 1:26; Ecclesiastes 7:29*). He was sinless, amenable to God's holy laws. But the devil deceived humanity, and succeeded in alienating man from the Creator and His law. The result of such disunion has been, is, and ever will be discord, unhappiness, and eternal ruin.

A human being cannot separate himself from his Creator's laws without separating from his Creator. Also, the one who accepts God as His Creator will want to obey His laws. Through Christ, he is enabled to obey God's holy law.

Before studying this vitally important lesson, let us clearly understand the place of God's eternal law in distinction to temporary laws;-for we do not want to "wrest" or twist the Sacred Writings to our own destruction, as Peter said many did in his day (*2 Peter 3:15, 16*).

There are three types of laws in the Holy Scriptures. Here they are:

1. The civil laws of the Jewish nation.

The civil laws regulated a multitude of matters in connection with the operation of the nation of Israel. God gave these laws to meet the situation in their day. They covered such problems as health, sanitation, disease, crime, court procedure, etc. In their details they are not binding as civil obligations today, though many wise and fundamental principles are revealed therein, which would still be applicable.

2. The ceremonial, or sanctuary, laws were abolished at the cross.

The ceremonial, or sanctuary laws governed the religious services of Israel and were symbols of the Messiah to come. They were for the Jews and all converts to the faith of Israel. These civil laws were written in a book (*Deuteronomy 31:24-26*) by Moses and placed in the ark of the Testament. It should be remembered that the ceremonial and civil laws were not written on the tables of stone, as were the Ten Commandments.

So the ceremonial laws were temporary in nature and no longer necessary after the life and death of Christ to which they pointed. Here are Paul's words:

Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."

Colossians 2:17: "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

3. The moral Ten Commandment law (*Exodus 20:1-17*).

The law of God was proclaimed from Mount Sinai, written on tables of stone, and preserved by Israel as the universal law of mankind.

Deuteronomy 10:4: "He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly" (*Deuteronomy 5:22*).

The Ten Commandment law was then placed inside the ark.

Deuteronomy 10:5: "And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made."

The moral Ten Commandment law is eternal. It is God's own covenant, and it is as everlasting as God Himself. God made another covenant, or agreement, with Israel concerning all His laws (*Exodus 24:7-8*). Israel promised obedience, and God said He would recognize them as His peculiar people on this condition (*Exodus 19:5-8*). This old covenant, or first covenant, was

weak because the people's promises were weak. So God made another covenant—a new and better covenant, established on better promises, even His own. He promised to write His law in their hearts and to forgive their past sins (*Hebrews 8:6-12*). God's holy law of Ten Commandments was the same in the old and the new covenants. The Ten Commandment law is as unchangeable as is the character of God.

Now we shall see how great Bible students have always recognized these different types of laws in the Bible.

The noted Dr. Ezekiel Hopkins penned these words:

"The ceremonial law is . . . properly abrogated, and its obligation and authority utterly taken away and repealed: for so the apostle is to be understood, when, in his epistles, he so often speaks of the abrogation and disannulling of the law: he speaks, I say, of the ceremonial law and Aaronical observances" (*An Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, p. 21).

According to the Methodist Episcopal Church (1896):

"Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no *Christian whatsoever is Free From the obedience of the commandments which are called moral*" (emphasis ours) (*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1896, article 6, p. 21).

The ceremonial laws are like the scaffolding of a building - to be removed when they have served their purpose. The moral law is like the immovable foundation of the building.

In the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, are the ceremonies, or ordinances, of the church that replaced the Old Testament ceremonies after the sanctuary service of Moses was abolished. But the moral law was not replaced because it had not been rescinded.

Neither will it ever be changed or canceled in any way.

I - HOW DOES THE BIBLE DESCRIBE THE TEN COMMANDMENT LAW?

1. It is perfect.

***Psalm 19:7:* "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"**

2. It is holy, just, good, and spiritual.

***Romans 7:12, 14:* "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. . For we know that the law is spiritual"**

3. It is righteous.

***Psalm 119:172:* "All Thy commandments are righteousness."**

4. It is truth.

***John 17:17:* "Thy Word is truth."**

5. It is eternal.

***Psalm 119:152:* "Concerning Thy testimonies, I have known of old that Thou hast founded them for ever."**

Joseph Cooke, D.D., wrote, "While God remains God, and man remains man, the Decalogue must stand."

And we might add a sixth characteristic of the law. It is love. Since "God is love" and His law expresses His character, the law is love too. Said John, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 *John* 5:3). The law is an expression of God's loving care for mankind.

2. WHAT DOES THE LAW DO FOR THE SINNER?

God uses the law to do for the sinner just what needs to be done. The sinner must realize that he is a sinner. The heavy hand of the law must be laid upon him, and he must be arrested in his course. Notice the following carefully:

1. It gives a knowledge of sin.

***Romans 3:20:* "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (*Romans* 7:7).**

2. It brings guilt and condemnation.

***Romans 3:19:* "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."**

3. It acts as a spiritual mirror.

***James 1:23-25:* "If any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (*James* 2:9-12).**

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Without the law, the sinner is like a man who is afflicted with a deadly disease, that he doesn't know he has. Paul said, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (*Romans 7:7*).

Evangelist John Brown once said: "The human heart cannot receive the healing thread of the gospel unless it is first pierced by the needle of the law."

3 - WHAT IS THE LAW UNABLE TO DO FOR THE SINNER?

The law cannot forgive. Law does not possess the power to forgive those who transgress its precepts. Only the Lawgiver can do that. Jesus died to redeem us from the curse of the law (*Galatians 3:13*). The law cannot keep the sinner from sinning because "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (*Romans 8:7*).

The law only shows the sinner where he needs to change; but the law, itself, cannot change him. And so let us get three facts about the law very clear.

1. It cannot forgive or justify.

***Romans 3:20:* "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."**

2. It cannot keep from sin or sanctify.

***Galatians 3:21:* "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."**

3. It cannot cleanse or keep the heart clean

(*Romans 9:3, 7-8*). The law is limited in its ability to do all that needs to be done for the sinner. A wound cannot be sewed up with only a needle. The thread of the gospel must do that.

4 - WHAT DOES THE GRACE OF CHRIST DO FOR THE SINNER?

When the law of God and the Spirit of God have made the sinner conscious of his sin, he will then feel his need of Christ and go to the Saviour for pardon. The publican found it so (*Luke 18: 13-14*). The woman taken in adultery felt condemned and ashamed. She needed sympathy and forgiveness, and Christ was ready to grant these to her. Then He said, "Sin no more."

If we confess and put away sin, He will forgive (1 *John 1:9*). This is grace, or unmerited favor. This gracious love of Christ awakens love in the heart of the sinner, and he then desires to serve and obey God. Here are four elements of the saving grace of Christ:

1. It forgives and justifies.

***Acts 13:38-39:* "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (*Luke 18:13-14*).**

2. It saves from sin, or sanctifies.

***Matthew 1:21:* "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."**

1 *Corinthians* 1:30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. It inspires faith.

***Ephesians* 2:8-10: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For ye are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."**

4. It brings God's power.

***Romans* 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."**

Forgiveness of sin and power over sin comes through the exercise of simple faith in God's promises and a full surrender of the heart to Him.

5 - WHAT IS THE RELATION OF A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE TO THE LAW?

1. The law becomes the standard of his life.

1 *John* 5:3: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."

2. He permits Christ to fulfill in him the righteousness of the law.

***Romans* 8:3-4: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."**

3. Christ writes the law in his heart.

***Hebrews* 8:10: "This is the covenant that I Will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I Will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I Will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (*Psalms* 119:11).**

To the surrendered, believing soul the law of God holds no terror. He is now free from its condemnation through Christ. In this sense he is "not under the law, but under grace" (*Romans* 6: 15). He is not under the bondage of condemnation by the law.

He is now in a position to exercise that "faith which worketh by love" and purifies the soul (*Galatians* 5:6). This means a transformed life in harmony with the moral law of God.

6 - WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF GRACE, FAITH, LOVE, AND THE LAW?

John Wesley wrote in his Sermons:

"I cannot spare [to be apart from] the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ. . Each is continually sending me to the other, -the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me 'above gold and precious stones' . . This is perfect freedom;

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thus to keep His law, and to walk in all His commandments blameless" (*The Works of John Wesley. AM. [3d. American ed.]. Vol. 1, pp. 314-315*).

From Wesley's statement, we can see that there is a close relationship not only between the law and grace but between the law and faith, love, and obedience too. Let us see how this works out.

Now let us consider that which forgives our past and enables us to obey God's law:

1. Grace is unmerited favor. But grace does not sanction continued transgression.

Romans 6:15: "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (verses 1, 2),

2. Faith does not make void, but establishes, the law.

Romans 3:31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law,"

3. Faith brings overcoming power.

1 John 5:4: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

4. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law,"

5. True love keeps the commandments.

1 John 5:3: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."

So we can see that the doctrine of grace without obedience to God's law is a doctrine of disgrace.

To bring this lesson home to our hearts, consider these facts: (1) the foolish man seeks salvation by his own works in keeping the law (*Galatians 3:1-3*). (2) The vain man thinks he does not need any good works (*James 2:20*). (3) The blessed man has his sins forgiven (*Psalms 1-2*).

There surely is no position on earth more enviable than that of the blessed man who loves God and keeps His commandments. It is the grace of God that makes it all possible—the wonderful grace of God! Have you permitted God to make of you a person so greatly blessed?

The next lesson is entitled "Your Special Day with God." It will reveal how to draw closer to your heavenly Father.

Brief Review Questions

Do we need to obey the ceremonial laws today (such as sacrificing animals)?

Do we need to obey the moral law of Ten Commandments today?

Will Jesus empower us by His grace to obey the standards given in the Bible?

OBEDIENCE THROUGH CHRIST SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

"The apostle Paul declares: 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good' (Romans 7: 12). Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author. It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile men to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law. In the beginning, man was created in the image of God. He was in perfect harmony with the nature and the law of God: the principles of righteousness were written upon his heart. But sin alienated him from his Maker. He no longer reflected the divine image. His heart was at war with the principles of God's law. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Romans 8:7. But 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,' that man might be reconciled to God. Through the merits of Christ he can be restored to harmony with his Maker. His heart must be renewed by divine grace: he must have a new life from above. .

"The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. 'Sin is the transgression of the law.' 'By the law is the knowledge of sin' (1 John 3:4: Romans 3:20). In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own.

"The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains 'remission of sins that are past' and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. .

"Is he now free to transgress God's law? Says Paul: 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' 'How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' And John declares: 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous' (Romans 3:31; 6:2: 1 John 5:3)." *Great Controversy*, 467-468