



Law vs Grace

Law and Grace in the Bible

by Joshua YJ Su, *The Joshua Mission*

OUTLINE

Introduction
Popular Ideas of Law and Grace
The Bible on Law and Grace
What is Law?
What is Grace?
How do Law and Grace relate?
In the Law of Moses
In OT History
In OT Wisdom
In the OT Prophets
In the Gospels
In Christian Baptism
In the Pauline Epistles
In the Epistle to the Hebrews
In God's Design - Law vs Grace
Grace is the New Law

Introduction

Welcome to this article on *Law vs Grace*. This piece is based on a social media-radio broadcast series done with Global ReachOut[#]. This was a 16 part series in 15 minutes segments on this theme. It remains available for listening. The notes used for broadcasting are revised and reformatted for this article.

The title, *Law vs Grace*, was chosen because, in the minds of many, law and grace are in contradiction, conflict or competition. Most of us would be aware that there are many different positions on how they relate. We shall do a brief overview of the trend of many popular ideas to give us background and a starting point to develop our position. But we are not surveying, nor seeking to compare or contrast these different, or opposing, views. I like, instead, to lead us to look deep into the Bible to draw out what it actually teaches on this. It can be said from the outset that the biblical revelation shows that law and grace have a deep, important, multifaceted and complex relationship. In the light of which, many popular views are oversimplifications, plainly wrong, or misleading.

Popular Ideas of Law and Grace

We typically see both law and grace in terms of human conduct and society. Law is often seen as black or white, right or wrong, justice & enforcement, penalties for wrongs & rewards for right. It is the societal code of ethics we are to uphold. Grace is often seen in terms of forgiving people even though they are wrong, doing good to others even when they have wronged us, being kind and gentle, even when the other is problematic and difficult. Hence discussions on the relationship between the two are typically concerned with the apparent contrast, if not conflict, between the two. They are thus often accepted as two irreconcilable opposites, or two opposing forces, in life. If we are to synthesise or harmonise them, we would look at some way of counterbalancing opposites. But, must it be law versus grace, or can it be law and grace?

<http://global-reachout.org/wp/> - including details of social media & radio channels

The Bible on Law and Grace

As we look into the Bible for what it reveals to us on law and grace, we find new perspectives beyond either accepting them as polar opposites or simply counter-balancing them. This new dimension comes from rooting both law and grace in God instead of society and humanity. It is when we understand both law and grace in terms of God and His action that we receive highly significant new insights to what each means and how they relate. This divine perspective is fully relevant and totally vital to the human and social realm. Indeed, it extends to the whole of creation as His enactment. The Bible itself teaches us how His truth applies to us as human beings in our personal, communal, societal, ethical, legal, moral and spiritual life. This is something a purely human perspective cannot achieve. In particular, the Bible makes it clear that God's revelation is Absolute Truth. In great contrast, our human perceptions and musings are limited, relative, and corrupted by our fallen sinful nature. He created us and all of reality. We need Him and His revelation to sort out how law and grace are truly related.

What is Law?

We had begun our treatment of what is law from the social human angle. We noted that, from that perspective, law is “often seen as black or white, right or wrong, justice & enforcement, penalties for wrongs & rewards for right” and “the societal code of ethics we are to uphold”. Let us now look to the Bible:

In the Bible, we find that the Old Testament, from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Malachi, is abbreviated as “Law”. It is called “Law” because it is a record of God's revelation of His truth to humankind, with the Israel of that time period as its first national recipient. Yet it is clear that the truths so received are meant for all humankind, and not for Israel alone. As the apostle Paul puts it in Ro 1:16, the Gospel of Christ is the power of God to save, both for Jews and Gentiles. This Gospel is rooted in the Old Testament, which Christ came to fulfill, as He explains in Mt 5:17. What the Old Testament revealed needs to be effected and fulfilled, not set aside. He has himself come to do just that. These truths reveals God-given standards that govern all of life, including the basis for true worship of the One True God, and the spiritual and moral basis for human life at all levels - personal, communal, legal, moral, spiritual, and all aspects of life and reality.

The pervasive meaning and ambit of God's law to human and societal life and the fact that it is codified into rules and regulations, may lead to its becoming confused with human legality. While it is true that God's law needs to be applied, and hence, often codified into rules and regulations, the distinction between the divine and the human is utterly vital. His truth, which is invisible and universally applicable and pervasive, cannot be confused with any particular set of rules and regulations. Yet, in order for His truth to be lived out, it needs to be expressed and explained in concepts and principles and codified into executable rules and regulations. This is the perpetual complexity and challenge of reality. The crux of the matter is whether whatever rules or regulations that are set are proper interpretations, expressions and enactments of His truth. His truth is unchanging and always applies. But the realities of our lives are transient and ever changing. His truth needs to be grasped through sound teaching of concepts and principles. The codification of it into rules and regulations needs constant revision to apply His truth correctly and relevantly to each new context. This is a vital interpretative key to understanding God's revelation in the Old Testament. His truth is revealed through the commandments, teachings, laws, ceremonies, rules and regulations given through the period of history covered in the books of the Old Testament. We need the leading and enabling of the Holy Spirit, as well as sound hermeutical principles, to properly grasp His truth as expressed by these means. Correspondingly, we must not make the means of how His truth is communicated to be the truth itself.

This OT Law applies to the Church and all humankind in Christ! God is God of all creation and all humankind. As Paul explains, in Ro 1:18-32, human sinfulness and guilt is universal. God's wrath

is set against all sinful humankind. With or without the Law, Ro 2:12-15 points out that the sinful nature of fallen humanity faces His righteous judgement. The next verse, v 16, tells us that the Gospel of Christ is the universal standard of judgement. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23). Hence God's Law defines what is sinful and what is righteous and good for all humanity.

What is Grace?

We had, earlier, identified that the popular or common understanding of Grace as “forgiving people even though they have done wrong, doing good to others even when they have done wrong to us, overlooking wrongs done against oneself to still be kind and good to the other”. As we did with respect to law, we shall now turn to the Bible for its definition of grace.

The core meaning of “Grace”, in Christian theology, as drawn from the Bible, is what God does for us that is not based on our merit or desert. It is what He gives us for our good that is not due to our earning it, achieving it, or deserving it. This is a surprisingly comprehensive and highly significant definition because of its extensive and multifaceted manifestations and enactments. The grace of God is acted out in very many ways:

Creation is an act of God's grace because there were no human beings before He created us, nor the earth and the universe in which we live. Therefore we do not deserve, cannot earn or achieve our creation. Yet, out of His own purpose and design, God created us to have a valuable, important and meaningful place in His creation. This is His grace.

The fact that the earth in which we live sustains our life and enables us to thrive are acts of God's grace. It is absolutely remarkable that the earth has an atmosphere with the right range of temperatures, the right mix of gases, that enables us to breathe and to be healthy. We have animal life and vegetable life that we can eat, cultivate, care for, and be domesticated to work for us. We have land and sea that can sustain these life forms, as well as our own, with their mineral composition and topography. All these are not accidents but acts of His grace. We deserve none of these. We earn none of these. They are not our achievements. Yet we live and thrive because we have them.

In the a universe that consists of billions of suns, planets, moons and astronomical objects, in all that we know and explore of space, not a single one of these even sustain one single life form. In extreme incredible contrast, the earth on which we live, the entire planet, is alive with millions of types of living creatures, from the microscopic to the gigantic, from the coldest to the hottest parts.

The entirety of our life in the here and now is only possible because God has provided us all we need in how He created this world. Even though this life is transient, we still find meaning and purpose in it. Without all the resources of the land, the sea, the animals, the plants He provided, not only can we not exist or live, we can have no economy, we can make no tool, we cannot invent anything. For all these require the resources He gave us in the first place.

Salvation is an act of God's grace because in sin we have condemned ourselves to face His righteous judgement. Yet, instead of destroying us as we deserve, God acted to save us! Everything God does to save us is an act of grace because none of it is deserved, none of it can be earned, none of it is something we can achieve. Sending Christ to die for us & rise from the dead is His supreme act of grace. Christ died so that we do not have to die the death we deserve. He rose from the dead to give us eternal life, a life we do not deserve.

How do Law and Grace relate?

We have thus defined law and grace, initially based on how they are commonly understood, but principally in terms of what the Bible reveals and teaches. We will now consider the different possible ways that the two may be related:

The Logical Possibilities

The logical possibilities of how law and grace relate may be divided into two groups:

Law Versus Grace OR Law And Grace

Law vs Grace

We have used this phrase as the title of this article because it is a common perception or assumption of many. As we look more closely at this position there are 3 variant positions -

1. **All Law, No Grace** - we get what we deserve, whether for good or for ill
2. **All Grace, No Law** - God forgives everyone and every wrong
3. **Law and Grace contradicts each other** - choose one or the other

Let us consider Each Option in turn:

All Law No Grace

This means that every good and every wrong we do get their due outcome. There is no forgiveness, no mercy, no leniency, whatsoever.

By observation, this position does not square with reality. In spite of the fact that there is much wickedness in this world, there are times when people forgive, or require less than what is due. Even in crime, not every crime is fully punished, leniency may apply.

All Grace No Law

This means that no matter what wrong is done, no penalty is sought, every wrong is ignored or left to be repeated without consequence.

This position also does not square with reality. Even though there are plenty of wrongs and injustice in this world, at least some get punished. Criminals do get caught and penalised. No one can keep on doing wrong without any penalty whatsoever.

Law and Grace contradict each other

If law is applied there is no grace. If grace prevails, no law applies.

There is some truth to the fact that the two may be mutually exclusive in application. If one wants to apply the law to the full, no grace can be allowed. If one wants to be gracious, then the law has to be set aside. But it is not true that they are irreconcilable opposites. The reality is that one can apply the law to a certain extent but allow for leniency without applying it to the full. It is possible to forgive a wrong and not apply the law or require only minor penalties. In other words, both law and grace can be applied together. It is only a question of the relative priority that we may give to each.

Law And Grace

This position suggests that both law and grace can be applied together or work together in some way. There are also 3 variants in this position:

1. **Law primary Grace secondary**
2. **Grace primary Law secondary**
3. **Law and Grace work together equally**

Notably, the third position in Law vs Grace that we had identified already suggests that some variant of law and grace is what applies in life.

The Biblical Position

While the above section sorts out the logical possibilities, we reassert here that our purpose is to study what the Bible says of law and grace. In so doing, we are working to discover how law and grace relate to each other in God's action. We project that the Bible shows us that God acts by both law and grace. Therefore the Bible's position would be a variant of the second group of possibilities.

In the Law of Moses

Many have the idea that the OT is all doom and gloom, all law and judgement. But this is a bad misunderstanding, a case of serious oversimplification into error & caricature. The OT revelation & dispensation includes both law & grace, although the emphasis in the OT is law.

Let us begin with law & grace in the Law of Moses:

The centre of the OT is the Law of Moses. It is so named because God chose Moses to be His human mediator to reveal and administer His law to the Israelites as His covenant people. Please note very carefully, however, that the Law of Moses is GOD's law, not Moses' law. God is the Source, the Author, the Lord. Moses is His chosen mediator. So even though Moses is used to identify these laws, they are in fact GOD's law, not human law.

This Law is revelation because it reveals to us God's truths and standards of right and wrong, good and bad, and the consequences of both, whether for better or for worse. It is God's dispensation in the OT. A "Dispensation" is a set of principles and operating procedures that God lays out as to how He will deal with Israel, humankind and the earth. There are more than one layer to God's OT laws:

The 1st & Broadest Layer is God's Covenant with Humankind

This broadest layer has two different dispensations. The first was God's covenant with Adam and Eve at their creation. This was broken by sin. The second was God's covenant with Noah after the Flood wiped out all of humankind, except for Noah and his family in the ark. It was a new beginning after the Flood. It was a second chance given to humankind based on Noah's faith in God.

God's covenant with Adam and Eve as the only pair of human beings He directly created governed them and all humankind as their children. It also governed human dominion over all the animals, care for all vegetation, and the physical earth. This was a dispensation of how God wanted to deal with humankind, the earth and all its inhabitants. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and believed the devil rather than God (Ge 3:1-7). They thus put all humankind as their children under the bondage of sin and the manipulation of the devil. This covenant and dispensation came to an end due to sin with the judgement of the Flood. But Noah found favour with God. God gave humankind a second chance by saving Noah and his family, and the animals with them, by the ark from the Flood.

God's covenant with Noah and his family after the Flood replaced the first covenant with Adam and Eve. Like the Adamic covenant and dispensation, it governed how God deals with humankind, the earth, and all its inhabitants. It governed the conditions of life on earth so that life was possible and may yet thrive in spite of the effects of the Fall (Ge 8:20 to 9:7). This covenant and dispensation of conditions of life on earth remains in place until today, with the rainbow as the sign that God gave to assure us that it is so (Ge 9:12-17). It was not, however, an answer to sin. Humanity, the earth and its inhabitants, remained in sin. The impact of God's judgement against the devil, Eve and Adam, as noted in Ge 3:14-24, are still in effect, even today.

The vast scope of these two covenants shows us that law in the Bible goes far beyond the common and popular idea of it being simply standards of human conduct, societal rules and regulations. They form the first, and universal, layer of the OT Law as governing how God deals with humankind and the conditions of all life on earth.

The 2nd Layer in the Law of Moses is God's Covenant with Abraham

The outstandingly important and remarkable nature of this covenant is that it was God's first covenant made for the salvation of humankind from sin. This was God's first step in how He will defeat sin and save fallen humankind and the world from death and give new life. This divine initiative to save us is the 2nd layer in the Law.

The Abrahamic covenant is the third covenant, if we count Adam's as the first, and Noah's as the second. But the first two covenants, have to do with God's dispensation for the conditions of life on earth that governs human, animal & vegetable life, and the physical world. These did not eliminate sin. The Abrahamic covenant has to do with how God will save fallen humanity and the fallen world from sin.

This is a point of the most profound significance for our topic, for in God's enactment, His grace was enacted in His law! God's act of grace to save all humankind and this fallen world was effected within the Law of Moses. This confounds even the logical distinctions that we had previously laid out. It gives a position that no logical deduction can supply. God's Grace is rooted in God's Law! We have noted that grace is God's favour to us that is not earned, achieved or deserved. The Abrahamic covenant in the Law of Moses, is an act of grace because humankind in sin does not deserve, cannot earn, nor can achieve, salvation. Hence, in the dispensation and act of God, Law and Grace are not in conflict. They work together under God. In particular, within the Law of Moses, God enacted His grace by law through the Abrahamic Covenant!

The 3rd Layer of the Law of Moses is God's Covenant with Israel as His People

It was in enacting this covenant that God chose Moses as His mediator. It is for this reason that these laws are collectively identified as the Law of Moses. Notably, it is Moses who collected together for us the ancient tradition and literature that reveals to us the Adamic, Noahic and Abrahamic covenants as the essential background to this national covenant. These covenants that precede and set the basis for the national covenant are vital in showing us the universal significance of God's action. This 3rd Layer, the Covenant of God with Israel through Moses, is a continuation and expansion of the Abrahamic covenant. For all Israelites are descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. God made a national covenant with them because they are inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant, a covenant that God made to bless, or save, all the families of the earth. Therefore this national covenant was never meant for the exclusive benefit of Israel alone. It is just one more step in God's universal plan to save all of humankind from sin. Israel was meant to be His instrument to show who He is to the world and that humankind was to worship Him alone. All who respond will be saved. It is an act of His great grace for our benefit which we do not deserve, cannot achieve, nor earn.

The national covenant that God made with Israel was founded upon the first five books of the Old Testament - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy - as the heart of this covenant. It revealed how to properly worship the One True God. It governed righteousness in relationships between God and human beings and between fellow Israelites. This included God's approved moral & ethical standards and the penal code against the breaking of the law. The rest of the books of the OT are rooted in the Law of Moses. The History Books, from Joshua to Esther, track and evaluate the walk of Israel according to whether they kept or broke this covenant. The Wisdom Literature, from Job to Song of Solomon, collects together the wisdom taught by those who have learned from the LORD how to live life on earth according to His law. The Prophetic Books, both the Major and the Minor Prophets, record God's intervention through His chosen prophets to lead His people back to upholding His covenant when they strayed from it. This included warning them of the righteous judgements they incur if they do not repent. They were also sent to deepen their grasp of the law and to guide and reveal to them His new enactments for the future. In summary, the Law of Moses, in particular, and the OT as a whole, record God's standard of righteousness in all areas of life - from how to relate with God, to how to relate with our fellow human beings, to how to relate with the creation that God gave us, including animals, plants, the physical environment.

We can see that the OT is definitely not all gloom and doom, showing only a bloodthirsty God. This is totally wrong. It shows that God, even in the Law acted in Grace to save humankind from

sin, even though we only deserve judgement. This point will be reinforced and expanded as we move further and deeper into the Bible.

In OT History

We have identified how the Law of Moses is the core of the OT, and how all the other books of the OT are rooted in that Law. We have noted that the OT History Books tracked and evaluated Israel's walk on the basis of the Law. In this section, we want to look into how God applied law and grace in the lives and events recorded in OT history. I have selected a few key events and persons for this purpose:

When Israel rebelled against God and refused to enter the Promised Land, as recorded in Numbers 13 & 14, God intended to destroy them then and there. This would be absolutely right, according to Law. But Moses interceded for Israel and God did not destroy them immediately. He allowed them to live their full lives. This was His grace. He showed mercy and kindness when none was deserved. However, none of that generation, except Caleb and Joshua, who believed that God would defeat the Canaanites and give them the land He promised, were allowed to enter the Promised Land. The Law still applied in that way.

In the time of Joshua, when he sent spies to spy out Canaan, they were discovered and nearly caught. But Rahab, a Canaanite, saved them because she believed in the God of Israel (Jos 2). God upheld the promise of the spies not to kill her and all who were brought into her house when Israel attacked (Jos 6:17, 22-25). It is extremely important to note that, according to Deuteronomy 7:1-5, all Canaanites were under judgement for total annihilation because of their sins. This was an explicit stipulation of the Law. But Rahab, who was a Canaanite, was saved! This was because, she not only assisted the spies from Israel to escape, she renounced the worship of her gods and her own people to join Israel (Joshua 2). God acted in grace to save her! This is OT, not NT. So any assumption that the OT is only judgement and destruction is utterly wrong. There is yet a further extraordinary extension to God's grace on this matter. In Matthew 1:5 Rahab is identified as the wife of Salmon, who is listed in the ancestry of the line that led to the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord!

David sinned against the Lord in committing adultery with Bathsheba and sent her husband to die in battle to try to cover his sin (2Sa 11). The Law stipulated that adultery and murder are both to be punished by death (Ge 9:5,6; De 22:22). But when David repented when confronted by Nathan, God did not require his death. But David would not go unpunished. David's son by Bathsheba died and he lost his throne for a time due to rebellion by his own son (2S 12). 2S 13 to 16 document how Absalom fulfilled this judgement in taking the throne from David. Yet, because David repented, God enabled David to regain his throne. This is noted in 2S 17 to 19.

These three examples clearly demonstrate how God applied both law and grace in the history of the Old Testament. This principle was enacted many times in how God dealt with His People, and even with Gentiles, as in the case of Rahab, in the period of the Law.

In OT Wisdom

Just as we have showed how God applied law and grace in OT history, we want to show how law and grace feature in the Wisdom Literature of the OT.

The heart of OT Wisdom was to know to fear God and walk according to His Law (Pr 1:1-7; Ps 111:10). This is the way of life that brings His blessings. The opposite of this is being a fool, to live a life that ignores or contradicts God's Law, such as taught in Ps 14:1. This only leads to His righteous anger and judgement.

In diametrical contrast, disobedience brings trouble, corruption and death; even if it sometimes seem that evil does get away with it. Yet, because God's Law cannot be thwarted without judgement and penalty, and no one can escape His justice. This is the guidance of Psalm 37. It counsels the righteous to be patient in doing good even if the wicked seems to prosper. It asserts

that God never relents from judging evil. It implies that even if one escapes judgement in this life, that one will still face His Final Judgement in the end.

All the Wisdom Books - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon - express the highs and lows of human life; its pains, struggles, frustrations, defeats, but also its greatest joy, the most sublime peace, glorious victories, the highest praise, and the most jubilant thanksgiving. Through these all, they teach that it is when one knows to walk with God and keep His ways that life finds its deepest meaning, the greatest satisfaction, the most significant purpose. Psalm 119, the longest psalm, and the longest book in the Bible, takes an extended look on the blessedness of knowing and living by God's Law.

However, we learn from the track record of the lives of the people of the OT and its history, and from the teachings of the NT, that no one, except Jesus, was ever able to fully obey the law. Ja 2:10-13 tells us that the breaking of one rule means the breaking of the whole law. Ro 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of God's standards. In this light, the blessings as taught by the Wisdom Books for obedience, cannot be on the basis of our being able to perfectly fulfillment the Law. Yet we know that God did bless the faithful in the OT, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, the prophets, and everyone true to Him. This can only be by His mercy and grace since absolutely no one, not even those who want to obey, are able to do so perfectly. Indeed, the OT clearly records the many sins and failures of even those who truly sought to walk with God; including those we named above. So, if blessings only comes by fully fulfilling the Law, no one can receive any. Therefore the blessing of God for the righteousness and the faithful, as taught in OT Wisdom, are assured to them by His grace. He blessed them because they put Him first and truly sought to obey His Law; not by their perfect obedience, which is beyond everyone. In other words, He blessed them by their faith in Him and by their true worship.

This is exactly what the NT teaches. In addition to Ja 2:10-13 and Ro 3:23, already noted above, Paul taught exactly this truth in Ro 4 by explaining that God counted Abraham righteous by his faith in Him. Hence, the Wisdom of the OT teaches the great but paradoxical truth that God's grace is found by obedience to His law! His blessing for obedience is by grace because no one, except Jesus, has ever been able to totally obey the law without breaking any part whatsoever. This definitively tells us that the OT and the NT declare the same truth. Correspondingly, law and grace apply to both testaments!

In the OT Prophets

OT Prophecy in the Major & Minor Prophets give us yet another major dimension to God's law and grace:

Israel had failed to keep the Law of Moses and is subject to massive judgements and penalties. Ez 8 to 10 is a typical passage among the Prophetic Books. It revealed that God departed from Jerusalem because of its deep-seated idolatry. In spite of repeated warnings throughout its history, it has repeatedly returned to sin and idolatry. Over time, it has grown in disobedience instead of obedience. Therefore God brought an end to the nation - the united kingdom was split (1K 11:9-13), and each kingdom, the North (Ho 13; 2K 17:6-18) and the South (Je 15:1-9; 2Ch 36:15-21) in turn, were destroyed and exiled.

Yet, in spite of this most dismal failure, God's grace endured to save it and bring it back from exile and to re-form the nation (Is 62). He will even extend His Kingdom to the Gentiles, to all humankind, who would repent of sin and worship Him alone as Lord and God, by the Messiah He will send. This is, of course, Jesus Christ, His Divine Son, the Messiah, the Lord and Saviour of all, and the only sinless human being (Is 42:1-9; 60).

Therefore the OT, especially through the Prophetic Books, points us to the coming of Jesus Christ. God pronounced in the OT that He will send His Messiah to save us from our sin. He will meet the requirements of the Law and yet His Coming to us is the supreme act of God's grace for us all.

The record of His Person, Life, Teaching, Death & Resurrection, His Mission of Salvation, and the significance of all of these for all humankind is the content of the New Testament.

In summary, the Prophetic Books tell us that Israel had utterly failed to fulfill God's national covenant with them. They are under the curses for disobedience as stipulated in the covenant. In spite of this, God remains faithful to extend His grace to save Israel and all humankind by sending His Son, His Messiah, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All who would repent of sin and surrender to Him as Lord and God will be saved. All who will not do so will face the full penalty of their sins for breaking His law. The law of God stands in that the unrepentant will face full judgement. The grace of God stands in that the repentant will be saved from their sins by their faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, law and grace stand side by side in God's salvation for all humankind. They do not contradict but complement. Each does not oppose the other. They work together in His purpose. Both are fully enacted without conflict, friction, or contradiction.

In the Gospels

We now move into the New Testament to see what it teaches on law and grace. We focus on the Person, Life, Ministry and Work of Jesus Christ our Lord, in the four Gospels, and throughout the NT. We approach from three perspectives: How He fulfilled OT prophecy; His proclamations and instructions; and His death and resurrection.

Prophecy & Fulfillment

Many OT prophecies are fulfilled by Jesus. Jesus Himself asserted in Mt 5:17-20 that He came to fulfill the Law, not to set it aside. Every dot and comma of the Law will be fulfilled. The Law will endure beyond the passing of this heaven and this earth. This very statement of Jesus contradicts any position that suggests that when Christ came, the Law is useless and to be ignored. He said to the Jews, in Jn 5:39-41, that they search the Scriptures because they believe in it they have eternal life, but the Scriptures testify of Jesus as the Messiah of God. Yet they refuse to accept Him for who He is.

It is important to note that in the NT, all references to "Scripture" or "Scriptures" refer to the OT. The NT was not written or complete until about 300 years after Jesus's ascension into heaven. So there was no NT for the Jews or the faithful to read in Jesus' time. So when Jesus told the Pharisees and scribes that the Scriptures pointed to Him as the One who gives them Eternal Life, He was referring to the OT they knew. Yet they refuse to recognise or receive Him for who He is, even though their own Scripture says so.

The Book of Isaiah, records Isaiah's prophecies of His birth by a virgin - Is 7:14; Mt 1:23; His life of sorrow, rejection & suffering - Is 50:4-9; and His dying for our sins - Is 52:13-52:12. Isaiah, as a major OT prophet, represents the role of many OT prophets, who in their messages, prophesied of the coming of the Messiah (the Christ, in Greek) and what He would proclaim or do.

All the Four Gospels record Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, when He was recognised and greeted as the Son of David who sits on the throne of Israel - Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-40; Jn 12:12-19. All these passages affirm that Jesus fulfilled God's covenant and promise to David (2 S 7) that a Son of his shall reign forever.

These claims and acts of Jesus that we have noted tells us that Jesus is the One who brings to us God's supreme grace of eternal life. He is the continuation and the fulfillment of the OT Law and Prophets. Therefore, in God's action, His Law and His Grace, do not clash. They both find their fullest expression in the Person and Life of Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the ultimate fulfillment of the Law of God by obeying it in full. This is something that no one else can do, past, present or future. He alone has lived a life that fully obeys the Law. He thereby affirmed its importance, fulfilled its purpose, and so made it complete. He alone is saved on the basis of the Law! Correspondingly, He is the supreme expression of the grace of God, because by fulfilling the Law, all of God's promises & blessings for all humankind come into effect in and through Him. Jesus

Christ is the unique, highest and ultimate union of the Law and Grace of God. As we pursue our grasp of who He is and what He has done, we will get an ever fuller & clearer picture of how God applies Law & Grace equally and synergistically.

The Higher Standard of Grace - the Teachings of Christ

We now turn to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapters 5 to 8, as our Lord's supreme teaching on the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is at the heart of His proclamation and revelation. Within this passage are a number of references to the Law and how Jesus' coming has changed their application. We want to learn how it connects for us the law and grace of God.

Immediately following His proclamation that He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it, in Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus identified 6 different OT Laws and how they are to be understood in the light of His mission and message. These are Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Eye for Eye, and Love your Enemies:

1. Murder - Mt 5:21-26 - the Law says we are not to murder. But Jesus says that even to hate another in one's heart is murder.
2. Adultery - Mt 5:27-30 - the Law says we are not to commit adultery. But Jesus says that to even lust after another in one's heart is adultery.
3. Divorce - Mt 5:31-32 - the Law allowed divorce if a certificate is issued. But Jesus says there should be no divorce because marriage is meant to be lifelong.
4. Oaths - Mt 5:33-37 - the Law says one is to keep one's oath to the Lord. But Jesus says every "yes" and every "no" we say should be upheld.
5. Eye for Eye - Mt 5:38-42 - the Law says that every injury or wrong incurs a penalty equal to the wrong. But Jesus says that we should be prepared to suffer injury and wrong rather than seek the judgement of the offender. The implication is that we should seek the other's good even at cost to ourselves, rather than seek to penalise the other for every wrong they make.
6. Love your Enemies - Mt 5:43-48 - the Law says that we love our neighbour but hate our enemies. But Jesus says that we are to love not only our neighbour but even our enemies. This is because sin and sinners are enemies of God. Yet He has come to save us, not to destroy us. Therefore the disciples of Jesus are to be like Him. We should no longer seek the penalisation of those who do wrong, even if it is against ourselves. We should seek their salvation instead.

The Principal Thrusts of the Contrast that Jesus Specified is that

1. Obeying God's Law cannot only be an outward legal action. It needs to be an inner quality of our character and motivation. The changes He taught for the 6 laws bear this up. It is more accurate to see that what Jesus taught revealed to us the greater depth and broader meaning of the Law, rather than to say that He has edited, or corrected, or changed them. By this perspective, we can better understand that He came to fulfil the Law, not to do away with it. In fulfilling the Law, He not only met its demands, but revealed its profounder meaning.
2. We are called to look beyond seeking justice for wrongs done to accepting injustice for the sake of loving and saving others. The change in the last two law, from an eye for an eye to turning the other cheek, and from hate your enemies to love your enemies, uphold this principle.

The surprising, if not shocking, meaning of Jesus' message is that grace calls for a higher standard of morality and character than the law! It calls for the inner transformation of our nature. The Law of Moses only specified outward conformity to a legal code. Jesus has reveals to us that the supreme grace of God for our salvation is the utter transformation of our fallen nature to become like His sinless character and being. This is something we do not deserve, cannot earn or achieve. It is most sacrificially and loving given to us by God in sending Christ to die and rise again for us. The change that God wants is not outward conformity but inner transformation.

The Law identifies what is sin or wrong and penalise it. Divine Grace seeks sinners to save and transform them, not judge them! Hence, like Christ, we are called to be willing to suffer wrong, as He did, while seeking the salvation of those who do wrong!

Death & Resurrection of Christ Jesus

The supreme act of God in Christ for us is His death and resurrection. We now look to what He teaches us on Law and Grace by doing so:

Christ's death is intended to fulfill all requirements of the Law for us (Ro 3:23-25). He is the only one who can die for us because He alone is sinless by fulfilling the Law. He is thus the only one who can be a sacrifice for our sin because He has no sin to die for (Ro 5:6-9; He 2:14-18). No one in sin can die for another because when we sin we incur our own death. Our death can only pay for our own sins. So Christ is God's sacrifice for our sins! He voluntarily accepted to die to pay for our sins. By so doing, all who accepts His Lordship and repent of their sin is covered by His death and do not have to pay the penalty themselves (Ro 10:9-10). This is immense grace!

Christ did not remain dead but resurrected from the dead to eternal life (1Co 15:3-4,20-21). Death, which is a penalty of the Law for sin, cannot hold Him. He has no sin. So the Father and the Holy Spirit raised Him from death to eternal life (Ro 8:11; 1Co 6:14). By so doing, whoever accepts the lordship of Christ, and repents of sin, is given New Life beyond physical death. One is born again in the Spirit (Jn 3:3,5-6). All who are saved in Christ, are called to live the life that upholds the Law and no longer sin against it. This New Life, this eternal life, is not a life without Law, but a life that upholds the Law by Christ's enabling. While it will reach its fullness after Christ returns, it begins now when we repent of sin and submit to Christ as Lord and God. He gives the Holy Spirit to live in us. As Paul explains, we are now to live life by the Law of the Spirit, not the Law of sin and death (Ro 8:1-2).

After we die physically, we do not return to this life in this fallen world. We resurrect into eternity with eternal life, the kind of life we are meant to live that is not encumbered by sin and is lived in full communion with God. It is a life beyond this life in the New Heaven and New Earth, after the destruction of this corrupted heaven and earth (2P 3:7,13; Re 21:1-4,22-27). It is not just a life that never ends, but a life that is fully true and obedient to God.

Therefore the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ completely satisfied all requirements of the Law and opened the way into eternal life. This is God's ultimate Act of GRACE! It is a life that never face death - no evil, no corruption, no decay, no sorrow, no pain, no sickness; full of meaning, full of joy, full of peace, full of righteousness, full of purpose, the life that is truly life which cannot be ended and thrives into infinity with God.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the life of grace that Jesus gives in saving us from sin, is not a lawless life that ignores the Law. It is a life lived by the power of His resurrection, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit He gives to live in us. It is this enabling that transforms our nature and empowers us to uphold the Law in a way we are not able to before. This being so, it means that the path of Grace in Christ lifts us to a higher standard of truth, than what the OT Law required. So Grace calls us to a higher standard and a better way of life than what the Law required. God in Christ, by the Spirit, transforms and enables us to do so, in a way that the Law never could.

In Christian Baptism

We move on from the Person and Life of Christ Himself in the Gospels to the wider teachings of the NT. We shall now consider the NT teaching on Christian baptism to see how it relates to law and grace.

The Great Commission in Mt 28:18-20 records Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations. Those who respond are to be baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore baptism is the rite that Jesus commands everyone who receive Him as Lord and God through the preaching of the Gospel to undergo. John in Jn 3:5-8 records Jesus' teaching

that one needs to be born of the water and the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Peter adds in Ac 2:38 that we are saved when we repent of our sins, are baptised in Jesus' Name, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from Christ.

There are 3 elements in Christian baptism:

The first element is repentance. Repentance is the call of John the Baptist. John's baptism is the baptism of Repentance. Without repentance, one cannot receive the salvation that Christ brings.

The second element is water. Water is used to baptise those who confess Jesus as Lord and God, Messiah and Saviour. John the Baptist proclaimed that he baptised with water. It is a sign of the Father cleansing us of our sins by the blood of Christ.

The third element is the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist proclaimed that he only baptise with water, but Jesus, to whom he points as God's Messiah, baptises with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11-12; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:15-17; Jn 1:26-27). John is saying he can only use water to symbolise God's forgiveness and cleansing for the one who has truly repented. But only Jesus can actually save and transform the person by giving the Holy Spirit to the one who is washed with water.

Each of these elements relates to what Christ has done for us through His death and resurrection. Repentance from sin is essential on the part of the one who want to follow Jesus as Lord and God. This is to accept Christ's death for one's sin. Cleansing by water is the outward mark to show that God washes the person clean of sin and forgives him or her. This marks that Christ cleanses the person of sin by His death. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to live in the one who surrenders to Him in worship to seal the person's salvation (Ep 1:13-14; Ro 8:9). It is the Holy Spirit's presence and enabling in the new believer that puts into effect the power of Christ's resurrection to transform the person and give eternal life.

In Ro 6:1-14, Paul explains the significance of Christian baptism more fully, in relation to Christ's death and resurrection, and law and grace. The practice of the early Church was to baptise people in the river. So Paul implicitly used immersion to make his point. When we enter into the water we identify with Christ in His death. It is a sign of our burial. Christ died for us to pay the penalty demanded by the Law for sin for us. By identifying with Him in baptism, we accept His death for us. In so doing, our sins are washed away. We no longer need to pay the penalty for sin. When we come out of the water, we identify with Christ in His resurrection. It is a sign of our being raised from the dead. Just as His death paid for our sins, His resurrection ensures that we will rise from the dead because sin cannot hold us in death anymore. In Christ we therefore receive eternal life that is uncorrupted and unhindered by sin and never ends.

In Ep 2:8-9 Paul states significantly that by grace we are saved through faith and not by works. God set out to save us not because we deserve it, or can compel it, or can earn it, or achieve it. He did it out of His own love for us, even though we are in sin and deserve only death and judgement. When we respond to Him by trusting Him in faith, He acts to save us by including us in Christ. So we are saved by His grace.

So Christian Life, is only possible by the supreme act of God's grace in sending Christ to die and resurrect for us. When we receive what He did for us by repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the penalty of the Law because Christ paid for it by His death for us. Yet the Law is not to be ignored or rejected. It remains God's standard of righteousness which we are to uphold. We are enabled in Christ by the Holy Spirit to do so.

In the Pauline Epistles

Let us now look more closely at the teachings of Paul on the relationship between law and grace. We have already noted Paul's teaching in Ep 2:8-9 in the previous section that by grace we have been saved through faith and not by works. We will now draw key thoughts from Romans, his most important epistle:

Ro 1 tells us that all humankind have sinned against God. Although we knew Him by His revelation, and even through nature, we persistently turned further and further away from worshiping Him to making images of human beings and animals to worship. We move deeper and deeper into immorality. Instead of repenting, we went from bad to worse. Hence humankind is without excuse and under the condemnation of sin.

Ro 2 tells us that therefore God is fully righteous in bringing judgement on all humankind. In sin, we are all bound to die by God's judgement. But the People of Israel, the Jews, believe that they are recipients of God's OT revelation and so have special insights into God and His truth that others do not possess. They believe that by keeping the Law, they are able to be righteous before God. So Paul firmly pointed out that, although the Jews have the advantage of having the Mosaic Law, they have not, in their history, in fact obeyed the Law. Therefore they are as much under the judgement of the Law as any other people.

Ro 3 further emphasised that in spite of the great advantage of having God's law, the Jews broke His law. Hence their rite of being circumcised according to the Law does not save them. Instead, it shows that all humankind, Jews or not, are all under the judgement of death because of sin. Then Paul points out that in God's plan, salvation does not come by obeying the Law, because no one is able to do so. Instead, salvation comes by faith in God and His promises. Faith means trust. We need to trust God that He will keep His promise to save us. God saves those who keep this faith.

Ro 4 points out the example of Abraham, the father of our faith. He trusted God at His word and believed that He will keep His promise when He called him to be the man He wanted to use to save all the families of the earth. God counted him as righteous, hence not due for judgement or death, because of his faith. Paul's emphasis is that salvation is not by Law but by faith in God. It is those who, like Abraham, have faith in God and His word who receive the grace of God. So now we are saved by faith in Christ. By faith in Him we receive what He has done on the cross by His death and resurrection for us. He has paid for all our sins and given us a new life, eternal life. Hence, by grace, we are saved through faith.

In Ga 3, Paul adds another perspective to the relationship between Law and Faith. The Law was used by God as a tutor to His People to teach them His way. But the Law cannot save. Its purpose was to point out that we need to be saved because we are unable to keep God's righteous standard that the Law revealed. In this way, it points all to the need for Christ. When Christ came, salvation by faith was put into effect. All who have faith in Christ to save them are saved by faith. The Law has done its work.

But, with reference to Ro 3:31, Paul firmly specified that faith does not nullify the Law. It calls us to uphold the Law. This is not in order to be saved because we are saved by God's grace through faith. But we uphold the Law in grace because the Law teaches us God's way of life. Not to do so is to return to sin! Therefore law and grace work together. Law points to the need for grace. Grace calls us to live a life that upholds God's law.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews

While Paul is a vital contributor to our grasp of the relationship between law and grace, he is not the only one. The Epistle to the Hebrews shares with us some supremely important truths of how law and grace work in the design and purpose of God.

Grace Higher Than Law

It would be fair to assert that Hebrews supports Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, and the Pauline epistles, that the Covenant of Grace that Christ established, is a higher covenant than the Covenant of Law. Christ is the Mediator of this New Covenant between the Father and the Church, as His People. The Old Covenant, is the OT Covenant, which is a Covenant of Law with Moses as the mediator between God and Israel. Jesus is greater than Moses and the Church

is more than Israel. It includes the faithful from all nations, from all humankind, from all times, who confess faith in Christ.

He 1:1-4 tells us that Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, is the Ultimate, Final and Highest Revelation of God because He is the ultimate and final Prophet who reveals to the fullest extent who the Father is and what Truth is. He is not only the greatest Prophet, He is the MESSAGE of all the prophets. We note that the OT prophets, including Moses as the greatest OT prophet, were sent by the Father to reveal Him and His truth. So Jesus, whose coming is the fulfillment of the OT, and the basis of the NT, is THE Prophet who brings the fullest revelation and is Himself the revelation that all the prophets point to. So the Grace of God in Christ fulfills OT Law as the OT prophesied, and reveals a yet deeper layer of truth that goes beyond what the OT taught.

He 1:5-14 tells us that Jesus is higher than the angels and He rules over them. He came as a man but is exalted above all. He is worshiped by the angels. The OT revelation was facilitated by angels. So the NT revelation exceeds the OT revelation because it is mediated by the God whom the angels worship and serve.

He 2:1-4 amplifies what is in Hebrews 1 by warning us that if disobeying the OT Law brings judgement, how much more severe would judgement be if we reject Jesus Christ who offers to us God's Supreme Grace for our salvation. This teaching is extremely important as it contradicts all ideas that assume that God's Grace means no more judgement and no more penalty. This truth tells us that that is only true if we receive the Grace He offers us in Christ. If we reject it, it brings the worst penalty and the most severe judgement because we have to pay for the full extent of all our sins. It means eternal death in the Lake of Fire (Re 20:11-15).

He 3:1-6 tells us very pointedly that Jesus is greater than Moses, just as a son is greater than the greatest servant. Here again, it is clear that the Grace of God in Christ exceeds the Law of God. But, as we have noted, this does not mean the Law is extinguished. It means that it is upheld and lifted to a higher level within the life of Grace.

He 4:1-13 tells us that there is a Rest that is greater than the OT Canaan. This is what Revelation reveals as the New Heaven and New Earth (Re 21:1-5). So even the meaning of the Promised Land is transformed from the earthly Canaan to the New Creation that Christ brings with Him. Those who are saved in Christ, after His Return, will enter into this eternal and final Promised Land.

He 3:7-19; 4:6-11 urges us to persevere in obedience until the end and never turn back. It warns us not to follow the example of those who came out of Egypt but refused to enter Canaan, and wanted to return to Egypt. They never entered the Promised Land! This is a very serious warning indeed. It tells us that if we do the same now as that generation we would lose eternity! We cannot turn back from God's salvation in Christ after having stepped out to follow Him. We cannot again go back to the world after choosing to leave it to turn to Christ. We need to embrace faith in Him until the end. If we do what that OT generation did, we would never enter God's Rest, never enter the eternal Promised Land.

These teaching in Hebrews makes it very clear that the revelation of God in Christ exceeds the OT revelation. In this sense, therefore, God's Grace exceeds God's Law.

Here then is the biblical case where we should say, Grace is greater than Law. Yet, while this is so, Grace does not eliminate the Law. Rather Grace upholds the Law and lifts it to a higher standard of expression. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said He came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law. He showed how the life of Grace lifts us up to a higher way of life in expressing the Law as our inner transformed character, instead of just an external legal code. Likewise, Paul asserted that in receiving Grace through faith, we uphold the Law so that we do not fall back into sin.

Setting Aside of the Sacrifices

In addition to the above teachings, Hebrews highlights for us how Christ replaced the sacrificial system of the OT in such a way that reveals to us the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. Hebrews chapters 8 to 10 give us the main points we need to note:

Jesus Christ is the new High Priest who offer God's sacrifice to take away our sins once and for all. He is, also, Himself, the sinless Sacrifice being offered to die for our sins. On the one hand, He replaced the OT Levitical priesthood, who themselves needed to be cleansed, who offered the sacrifices repeatedly, but cannot take away sin. On the other hand, He replaced all the OT sacrifices that are done repeatedly because they cannot take away sin. Their purpose was to point to Jesus who alone is able to, and has, atoned for our sins. By being both the perfect High Priest and the sinless Sacrifice, His one death has eternally removed sin from all who receive Him as Lord and accept what He has done for all. His one death fully satisfied the requirement of the Law to judge sin by death. He, thus, release all who believe in Him from the power of sin and death. Hence the OT sacrificial system is obsolete and set aside because it is no longer needed. Christ has fulfilled its purpose by His death on the cross. On this basis, the OT Covenant itself is obsolete and set aside for the same reason that Christ has come and fulfilled its purpose, which was to point to Him.

This very significant point has, unfortunately, given rise to the popular idea that the Law is obsolete and to be set aside. But this is an inaccuracy that leads to error! It is the sacrificial system, NOT the whole Law, that is obsolete and set aside. We are no longer required to do any sacrifices of the OT. Christ has done away with it. But the Law as the revelation of God's Truth still stand!

We need to remind ourselves of two points we have noted:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that He came to fulfill the Law, not to abolish it. He calls us to a higher standard of the Law in that what the Law teaches have to become qualities of our inner character and values, not just external regulations.

Paul tells us that being saved by faith to receive God's gracious salvation means that we uphold the Law. To set aside the Law is to return to sin. We are not saved by keeping the Law. We keep the Law because we ARE saved! The Law remains as God's revelation of what is good and right and true.

So the sacrifices of the Law and the rituals of the OT are obsolete. But the standard of truth and righteousness that the Law revealed is to be embedded into our lives by our inner transformation. The Holy Spirit who lives in us is the New Law that gives us eternal life and transforms us to be like Christ. May the Lord enable us to know and live by this Truth!

We now affirm that the NT teaching on Law and Grace is that Law points to the need for Grace but Grace calls us to uphold the Law. It is true that the OT sacrificial system is obsolete and set aside. Yet the Law as God's revelation of the way of life He wants us to uphold still stands. Indeed, it is raised to a higher level to be an inner transformation of character instead of an external legal system.

In God's Design - Law vs Grace

At this stage in our journey, you may feel that this article is mistitled because, each step of the way, we have been building the big picture that Law and Grace not only do not conflict, they cohere together as one. Each is deeply related to the other in God's economy as reveal in the Bible. Your impression is not wrong, but you are not misled. We have used the title, "Law vs Grace" as a first step and as a stepping stone into our topic because many people assume that the two are in conflict. I have led us to see that in the Bible, as the Word of God, Law and Grace are deeply interconnected in His character and design. Therefore, the popular assumption that Law

and Grace are inherently in conflict is a misconception! As we come towards the conclusion of this article, I like to bring together the main points of what we have been laying out.

Not only is there no conflict between Law and Grace, Law is the foundation of Grace! For the Abrahamic covenant, which is the historical root to the Mt. Sinai covenant between God and Israel, which is the heart of the Mosaic Law, is God's act of grace to save all humankind in Christ.

The stipulations of the Mosaic Law, as God's covenantal requirements for Israel in the OT, is an act of revelation for all humankind. It revealed to us that we cannot save ourselves. Being in sin, we are unable, by our own effort, to fulfill the requirements of the Law. The penalty for breaking the Law is judgement and death. It is an outcome no one can escape or avoid. Yet the purpose of this revelation is to call us to repent from sin and to worship the One True God who alone can save us. In other words, the Law points out that we need to be saved because we cannot, we are incapable of, freeing ourselves from sin and its condemnation. We are entirely at the mercy of the One True God who alone can save us. Yet He who justly condemns us is the One who has acted to save us. Salvation is, and only can be, by His Grace. We do not deserve it, we cannot earn it, we cannot achieve it. Yet He has chosen to give it to us in spite of our disqualification and not deserving so; if we repent and return to Him in obedience.

The supreme grace of God to save us is enacted in the Law through the Abrahamic covenant, for in it He said to Abraham, through you all families of the earth shall be blessed (Ge 12:3). Those who share the faith of Abraham in the One True God would be saved (Ro 4:13-25). He fulfills this covenant by sending Jesus Christ to fulfill the requirements of the Law that we cannot fulfill, and then to die as God's sacrifice for us, so that we can be saved (1Co 15:1-6). Having paid for our sins by His death, Jesus is resurrected from the dead to give us Eternal Life, a Life that cannot be condemned by the Law. It is a new life that is sinless & thrives forever. God's supreme grace and salvation is, therefore, only found, in Jesus Christ. The lessons from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in particular, clearly and firmly establish this. Grace is greater than Law in that Christ is the supreme expression of God's Grace by fulfilling the Law and lifting it up to a higher level of expression.

It is Important not to characterise the transition from the OT to the NT as the end of the Law. For doing so can only lead into the error of belittling and ignoring the importance of its purpose as a continuing relevant guide to righteous living. It is better to say that Christ, in giving us God's Grace, has lifted us up to a higher level of the Law. This higher level lies in expressing the Law in its deeper and fuller meaning, rather than limiting it only to an outward legal code of conduct.

We, therefore, affirm that the Bible teaches us that God's Grace is higher or greater than God's Law. Yet Grace and Law work together. He leads us by His Law to be saved by His Grace in Jesus Christ. His Law leads us to receive His Grace. His Grace calls us to uphold His Law to live it out at a higher level of expression as inner transformation rather than external legality.

Grace is the New Law

In this final section, we want to expand on the insight stated in the last paragraph, "His Grace calls us to uphold His Law to live it out at a higher level of expression as inner transformation rather than external legality." This brings the relationship between Law and Grace to a climax. We can say that Grace is the New Law!

How can Grace be Law? Let us revisit the our earlier biblical definitions of Law and Grace:

Law is God's truth that is "the standard that governs all of life - the basis for true worship of the One True God, and the spiritual and moral basis for human life at all levels - personal, communal, legal, moral, spiritual, all aspects, ... all dimensions of human life".

Grace is "what God does for us that is not based on our merit or desert". It is "what He gives to us for our good, that is not due to our earning it, achieving it, or deserving it".

Let us apply these definitions of Law & Grace to what we have uncovered from the Bible:

The requirements of the Law, as revealed in the OT, is the standard and way of life that was meant for all humankind for all aspects and dimensions of life. The tragedy that it unveiled was that, in sin, we are unable to uphold it. All humankind is thus condemned to death & judgement. God, by His supreme grace, sent Jesus to fulfill the Law by His sinless life, and died for all humankind as God's sacrifice. Jesus met all the requirements of the Law and opened the way for all humankind to be saved.

Salvation in Christ covers everyone but is not automatically applied to everyone. It only applies to those who admit that they are condemned by sin and repent of it as evil. We need to recognise that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour because He alone fulfilled the Law. Humankind need to submit to worship and obey Him alone as Lord and God (Ro 10:9-11). All who do so are saved in Christ for all eternity. He resurrects them after they die. To these people, Christ gives them the Holy Spirit to live in them, as His guarantee of their salvation (Ep 1:13-14).

The call and warning in Hebrews is that we must not seek to go back to sin, like those who left Egypt but wanted to go back. They were rejected from entering the Promised Land. Instead, we must be like those who persevered in faith and entered the Promised Land. This means that we must keep faith in Christ throughout this life and never give it up. But the Promised Land for us is not the OT Canaan, but the New Heaven and New Earth that Christ will bring with Him when He returns (He 3:7 - 4:13; Re 21:1-8).

In being saved in Christ we enter into a New Life! It begins with our salvation in Christ in this world and time when we become a "new creation" (2Co 5:17). It continues beyond physical death in the New Heaven and New Earth (1Co 15:50-58; Re 21:1-8). This New Life, which is Eternal Life, is the life we receive in Christ. This life is enabled by the Holy Spirit who lives in everyone who truly puts Christ first (Ro 8:9). It is the Holy Spirit who lives in us who enables us to live this New Life.

The Holy Spirit is the New Heart and the New Law that replaces the heart of stone and the old Law that condemned us (He 9:11-15; 10:15-18; Ez 36:22-32). Hence the New Life is a life governed by the Law of the Spirit of Life (Ro 8:1-11)! Unlike the old Law, He is not an external code that cannot save or transform. He is the Law who lives in us, who transforms and sustains us in the new way of eternal life. He is the living power of the resurrection in us! The unmerited, undeserved, Grace of God lives in us in the Person of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. By His indwelling, we live the New Life by a New Law that triumphs over sin and death & enables eternity! Hence, Grace is the New Law by which we live! It is a life that is only possible by our being in Christ, with the Holy Spirit living in us!

May the our Lord and God bless all who receive His Truth into their hearts to be transformed to live by His Grace, which is His New Law!