

# **The Two Covenants**

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## **The Two Covenants**

The Old Covenant was Jesus Christ in type and shadow. The New Covenant is Jesus Christ Himself - - "Christ in you." (Col. 1:27) In a nutshell, those are the definitions of the Old and New covenants, and the difference between them.

Paul summed this up in one verse:

***Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Col. 2:17)***

This principle is repeated in Hebrews:

***For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (Heb. 10:1)***

In the Old Covenant there is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ everywhere. You look at the Old Covenant and what God gave -- the very law that God gave is a type and shadow of the righteousness that is a Person, Jesus Christ. The tabernacle is Christ in his impact on humanity. The priesthood is Christ as our High Priest. The animal sacrifices pointed toward the necessity of a substitutionary sacrifice for man. The holy days show God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. And all the ordinances -- the things that we might call, "lesser important points of the law" -- all of those, in one way or another, either spoke of Jesus Christ in His humanity or in His divinity. But gather it all up and it was Christ in type and shadow in His redemptive work. That was the Old Covenant.

But despite all of that we are told in the above passage from Hebrews that there was nothing in the Old Covenant that could, "make the comers thereunto perfect." Indeed, this is not only the overall message

of the epistle to the Hebrews, but it is what Paul continually preached.

Under the Old Covenant, NO ONE was born from above. NO ONE was indwelt by Christ through the spirit of God. Rather -- when you gather it all up --the OT was intended to point toward what the New Covenant would be: The reality of the very Person of Christ come to dwell in his people.

The core definition of Christianity is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) God has given us ALL things freely in His Son. (Rom. 8:32) Christ in the believer IS the believer's life; IS the believer's ALL.

***For the law was given by Moses, but grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)***

The New Covenant is that of grace – but not grace as a, "thing," or as a, "legal classification." or as a new doctrine or belief system. No. The New Covenant is grace given in a Person, Jesus Christ.

### **A Serious Problem**

It would seem that one of the biggest confusions in the Christian church has always been the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. This problem is often called a problem of, "law vs. grace," but it really goes back to a blindness to Jesus Christ as the Living Mediator, indeed, we might even say, "the Living Presence," of the New Covenant of grace. Because folks do not realize what it means to have CHRIST IN US – do not know Christ Himself – we think that the problem is that of theological interpretation. But that is only a symptom. The problem is a blindness to Christ Himself.

If you read the epistle of Paul to the Galatians, you will begin to grasp the seriousness of this problem. The Galatian church was comprised of SAVED PEOPLE. Paul never questions that. But they had accepted a Christianity that was a hybrid of the Old

and New Covenants. They were living under the law – thinking that this was where Christ had brought them. The beginning of the epistle sets the tone. He tells them outright that they are under ANOTHER GOSPEL. What could be a greater deception and spiritual sickness?

Paul also told the Galatians, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace." (Gal 5:4) Now, that is a dangerous situation – for Christ to have no effect unto you! Yet this is what happens if you continue, despite being saved, to live under the law. God inspired an entire epistle to address this dangerous possibility.

Paul the apostle did not leave the Galatians without a solution. But the solution he offers is NOT that they develop a better theology. Neither does he tell them that they needed to have a little less focus on the law. And despite the fact that they did need to stop trying to make themselves righteous through law-keeping, but rather, to put their faith in Christ – Paul preaches this to them at length – despite their great need for the righteousness of Christ by faith – Paul gets right to the core. He tells them their real need:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)***

The word translated, "formed," in this verse means, "to inwardly realize and express." Paul knew that in order for any of us to be able to put our faith in Christ that we need to REALIZE Christ; know Christ. We have to have SOME personal revelation of Him. So, the solution for those who are under the law is not merely better theology – that will eventually follow. But the solution is CHRIST IN US – and a growing realization of Him as OUR LIFE. Grow to know Christ and all of the arguments about law vs. grace will dissipate. And He will begin to BE YOUR LIFE.

We need to be clear about this: Christianity is CHRIST IN US. The New Covenant is CHRIST IN US. Everything that God is doing and that God is building is based upon the foundation of the Living Christ in His people. Christ IS our life and Christ IS our righteousness. Morph Christianity into a list of rules, laws, and principles – even “good” ones – and you are under ANOTHER GOSPEL. You are deceived. You have fallen from GRACE.

### **Law or Grace?**

Many people down through the church age have defined the OT as one of LAW, and the NT as one of GRACE. But while there is Truth to this, it is secondary Truth. Such definitions make the Covenants sound like religious systems that man is supposed to follow. In effect, they become doctrinal constructs rather than a relationship with God.

Take the NT for example. The NT is GRACE. But it is only grace because the NT is the reality of the Person of Jesus Christ. John writes, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17) The NT is that of grace because the NT is Jesus Christ in His people – which means that believers are ONE in spirit with Grace Himself.

What this means is that GRACE is not a THING. It is not merely a legal classification. It is not a doctrinal or religious system. Indeed, GRACE is not a, “covenant,” in the sense of an, “agreement.” No. Rather, GRACE is a Person with Whom believers are ONE. Thus, the NT is that of GRACE because the NT is the reality of Christ. You cannot separate the two – you cannot separate Christ from the fact that HE IS the embodiments of all grace and Truth.

The ramifications of this Truth are staggering. For if Jesus Christ is the grace of God in a Person, and believers are ONE with Christ, then can we see that under the NT that ALL is of grace? Sure. That is why

Paul was able to say, “You are not under law, but under grace.” (Rom. 6:14) Do we think that he was talking about being under a better religious system? Or that believers are merely forgiven? No. He was saying we are, “under grace,” because we are IN CHRIST. He was talking about a NEW LIFE – a different kind of LIFE – He was talking about the fact that under the NT believers are one with Grace Himself, and thus, ALL that speaks of the Christian life and of relationship with God is GRACE.

Most of us do not believe this. Most of us would give assent to all of the passages in scripture that would tell us over and over again that we are not under law -- but under grace – yet most of us nevertheless have a Christian life that is a mixture of law and grace. And this is exactly, at the core, the Galatians problem. In their doctrine and teaching they did not directly deny the grace of God. But Christ had become of NO EFFECT for them because they denied Christ Himself as their life in practice.

The Truth of God’s grace in Jesus Christ is given to us in the New Covenant. But it is not merely given to us in the form of teaching and doctrine – those are necessary to communicate the Truth – but the Truth of God’s grace is given to us in HIS SON. In Christ, God has given all grace and Truth. Thus, if Christ is in you, you are not only, “under grace,” but in Christ you are a recipient of ALL that God has given.

### **God’s Own Definition**

We have seen that the OT was a shadow of Christ. The NT is the reality of Christ Himself – in His people. Thus, the Covenants involve more than law vs. grace. But let’s look a bit more into the Bible. In His Word, God Himself has told us the number one distinction between the Covenants:

***But now has he (Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the***

***mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For 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: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which is decayed and waxed old is ready to vanish away. (Heb. 8:6-13)***

Hebrews 8 is a reference to a prophecy from Jeremiah 31. God is announcing that He intends to make a NEW covenant – one that replaces the OLD. But note this vital fact: God clearly states that the NEW covenant will be one that is, "NOT ACCORDING to the OLD. "

Do you see that? The NT is NOT LIKE the OT – it is different. God Himself said so. So, we are not left to guess at WHETHER the Covenants differ. They do. And God Himself tells us the difference between the Old and New Covenants.

God says that the biggest difference between the NEW covenant and the OLD is this: "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and

every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Do you see the difference? The NEW Covenant would be INWARD. In addition, because the NT is inward, EACH believer will have their own, personal, individual, one-on-one relationship with God. We know that all of this is possible because of Jesus Christ. In the OT language of type and shadow, God is announcing that the NEW Covenant is going to be CHRIST IN US – and that because Christ dwells in EACH believer, EACH believer has a personal relationship with God.

The announcement that God will put his laws in the heart of believers speaks of the NEW BIRTH. It speaks of something that was NOT possible under the Old Covenant. Sure, for under the Old Covenant, there was no new birth; Christ did not dwell IN people.

### **Christ In Us**

According to God, the fundamental difference between covenants is that the NEW covenant will be INWARD. The OLD covenant was OUTWARD. When we finally get into the New Testament writing, it is explained much more, and it is revealed as to the MEANS by which this New Covenant will be possible. It is possible through CHRIST IN US.

As noted earlier, none of this was possible under the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant made no one, "perfect." It was a shadow of Christ, not the reality. Indeed, in the NT Paul states directly that the reality of Christ in His people was HIDDEN from generations past. It was there only in type and shadow:

***Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you,***



***to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.....which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Col 1:25-27)***

We enter fully into the New Covenant only when we enter into Christ, that is, when Christ enters into US. Get that. CHRIST IN US is the fullness of the New Covenant.

Read again the passage above from Colossians. Christ in people was NOT possible – indeed was a reality HIDDEN from ages and generations before Acts 2.

Jesus Christ could not be IN people, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, before Christ came and finished His redemptive work. Thus, He could not have dwelt in people under the Old Covenant. Jesus Himself said so. He said:

***And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)***

***In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)***

***Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (John 16:7)***

Jesus continually spoke of the giving of the Holy Spirit as a future event – dependent upon His finished work and ascension. Indeed, He directly stated that, yes, the spirit of God had been WITH God's people. But the spirit of God would be IN them. Is this not exactly the difference between the Old and New Covenants? God had been WITH His people – through types and shadows, laws, and ordinances. But once Jesus ascended, and beginning in Acts 2, Jesus Christ would dwell IN His people through the Holy Spirit.

And yet there are millions of Christians who believe that the disciples were indwelt by Christ through the Holy Spirit prior to Acts 2. They believe that Acts 2 some a second blessing on top of that – a greater fullness. But if you believe this, it should be clear by now that what you are saying is that the New Covenant was in effect BEFORE Christ ascended. This is impossible. For the New Covenant is CHRIST IN US by the spirit – and that did not, indeed, could not happen until Christ ascended. It DID happen in Acts 2.

The New Covenant was ushered into the experience of God's people starting in Acts 2. Not before. And therefore, it is conclusive that everything that the New Covenant made possible – Christ in us through the Holy Spirit being the main thing – was not possible BEFORE Acts 2 -- but was fully possible only after Acts 2. This is as certain as the Covenants themselves.

Acts 2 was the END of the Old Covenant – the end of being under the law. And it was the beginning of the NEW for God's people. Thus, Acts 2 was NOT a second blessing. It was THE one and only blessing – the ONE AND ONLY baptism with the Holy Spirit – the disciples in the upper room received Christ within through the spirit of God.

## **A New Creation**

The New Covenant is CHRIST IN US. Or, as Paul sometimes says, “we are IN CHRIST.” Through the redemptive work of Christ, believers are, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) This is how we are IN HIM and He is IN US – through a spiritual union or oneness.

Another place where Paul describes this is found in II Corinthians. He says:

***If any one is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed OVER. Behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God. (II Cor. 5:17-18)***

Here we see TWO lives: The old Adam life -- which is, “passed over,” as it pertains to the new creation. (The translation, “passed away,” is incorrect.) And we have the new life in Christ, i.e., the new creation – which is CHRIST IN US. But in fact, each of these two lives are represented by the two covenants. The Old Covenant dealt with those IN ADAM – in anticipation of new life in Christ. The New Covenant is the new creation – Christ in His people.

The way in which we are delivered from out of the old Adam life and into new life in Christ is not through a better theology. We are delivered through death and resurrection; indeed, we are delivered by being planted into Jesus Christ – by being planted into His death and resurrection.

Jesus spoke of this essential many times, but His most direct teaching is found in Matthew 16:

***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)***

Here again we see TWO LIVES. And if we want to walk with Christ; walk in the Truth – live in the reality of the New Covenant – we must, by faith, LOSE ourselves to Jesus Christ. We must take our place in His cross; we must do so by picking up our personal cross. Only then will we discover by experience Christ as our life.

The place to start is by asking God, “to do whatever it takes,” to bring us into the fullness of His purpose in Christ. Then when God does do whatever it takes we must pick up the cross and follow Christ. If we do we will find Him as our life.

What folly it is to try to live the Christian life, “on the wrong side of the Cross,” that is, by trying to keep rules and laws from out of the Adam life. No. The Adam life is PASSED OVER as it pertains to the new creation. Christ is to be the life of the believer. We must lose that old life and all of the self-righteousness that is in it.

### **The Baptism of John**

Some of the confusion on this matter of the Covenants is because we don't understand the mission of John the Baptist, or the meaning of what is termed, "John's baptism. "What did people receive under John's baptism?" Did they receive CHRIST IN THEM through the Holy Spirit?

Impossible. We have already quoted John 14:16-17 where Jesus Himself clearly said that the Holy Spirit was only WITH them but would be – future tense pointing towards Acts 2 – IN THEM. That ought to settle any question about John's baptism. John's baptism did not result in an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No. John's baptism was salvation only under the Old Covenant. It did not impart salvation through the indwelling of Christ.

Salvation was ALWAYS through Jesus Christ. Those under the Old Covenant could put their faith in Christ by anticipation. Thus, it is proper to say that, yes, they were saved. But the experience they had of salvation – the experience they had of Christ – in this life, was not what was possible only under the New Covenant; only through the indwelling of Christ. That is exactly what God Himself said was the difference between the two covenants.

John's baptism was under the Old Covenant. In fact, it is correct to say that John and his mission, indeed, his baptism, was the fullness of the Old Covenant. In John the Baptist the Old Covenant was brought to fullness and completion.

The Bible prophetically states the identity and purpose of John for all to hear:

***Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:1-5)***

If you read this purpose for John the Baptist, you are likewise reading the purpose of the Old Covenant. It was, through type and shadow, to prepare the way for the Person of Jesus Christ. But as wonderful as that was, the ministry and baptism of John did not result in Christ WITHIN. As Jesus told His disciples, the spirit of God had been WITH THEM. But the spirit – once Jesus ascended – would be IN THEM.

We see this Truth through the clear contrast that John himself made between his baptism, and what Jesus would make possible through His Redemption:

***I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:  
but he that comes after me is mightier than  
I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall  
baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:  
(Mat 3:11)***

This was then verified by Christ Himself:

***For John truly baptized with water; but you shall  
be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days  
hence. (Acts 1:5)***

Once again, we see the Old and New Covenants being contrasted. John's baptism was immersion into water. It was a type and shadow of the baptism which Jesus brought: With the Holy Spirit and fire -- which was the baptism INTO CHRIST HIMSELF.

Can we see that the baptism that Jesus would bring is NOT THE SAME as John's baptism? The two are being contrasted -- and Jesus' baptism is stated as SUPERIOR. Sure. John's baptism was a baptism into the Old Covenant. Jesus' baptism was a baptism into HIMSELF, which means it was a baptism into the New Covenant. And just as the New Covenant was vastly superior and replaced the Old Covenant -- indeed, the Old Covenant paved the way for the New, so did the baptism of Christ replace the baptism of John -- indeed, John paved the way for Jesus. The moment Jesus Himself began His ministry, John was arrested. His ministry was over and fully accomplished.

Now, gather all of this up and the conclusion is inescapable. If John's baptism did not result in Christ within then it did not impart eternal life within, for Christ within IS that eternal life. Sure, for as we have seen, In this life John's baptism could only put you under the Old Covenant. But if those who were baptized by John did not have Christ within, then those who were in the upper room in Acts 2 did not have Christ within -- UNTIL they received the outpouring of the spirit on that day. That reception of

the spirit of God was therefore not a SECOND blessing on top of Christ in them. No. Rather, it was the one and only experience of receiving Jesus Christ within through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

We MUST understand that Acts 2 was the first time anyone ever received Christ within. If we will grasp that Truth, then we will no longer be under the delusion that the disciples had Christ within BEFORE that day -- and then come to the wrong conclusion that what they received in Acts 2 was a second experience added to Christ. No. In fact, we will also realize that the four examples in the book of Acts -- where people who were baptized with the spirit said they had received, "John's baptism" -- we will realize that neither were they receiving a second blessing or experience added to Christ. No. Like those in Acts 2, they were receiving Christ within for the first time -- replacing the baptism of John that they had previously received.

John's baptism was never said to indicate NEW LIFE. It is simply a baptism that indicated that a person had relinquished their old life -- through repentance. In fact, these people had come under the fullness of the Old Covenant.

### **John, The Last OT Prophet**

John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet. In fact, he embodied the Old Covenant. His ministry was to make a path in the wilderness for the Lord, which is exactly what the Old Covenant did. John brought to fullness everything God provided under the Old Covenant. His baptism symbolized salvation under the Old Covenant, which was a legal salvation, based in faith in the future Savior. But John's baptism could not give you a NEW BIRTH, any more than the Old Covenant could give you a new birth. No. That was possible only through the New Covenant, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

There is perhaps no clearer a statement to this effect than the one that Jesus made about John:

***Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt. 11:11)***

This statement tells us that even John himself was NOT yet born again into the kingdom of God. Do you see that? John was the greatest of all ever born of woman – of all those ever born into this world through natural birth. Yet, the LEAST of those born again into the kingdom is greater than John! Thus, John could not have been born again. He was saved under the Old Covenant, indeed, was the full embodiment of it.

John will be in heaven, as will all the OT saints. But the, "this life experience," of salvation was not the same for those under the Old Covenant as it was for those under the New. They were all saved by the same Jesus, and the same Blood. But for THIS LIFE, they were not born again. They couldn't be. That was possible only once the New Covenant came to pass.

Now, the conclusion here is inescapable. If John, the greatest ever born of natural birth was NOT born again – because the New Covenant had not yet begun – then neither was anyone else born of natural birth ever BORN AGAIN – up until that time! Neither were the disciples of Christ, and neither were any of those people in the book of Acts who said that they had received only, "the baptism of John." Thus, when they did receive the Holy Spirit, it was NOT a second blessing. It was not a second blessing any more than what the disciples received in Acts 2 was a second blessing. Rather, they received CHRIST IN THEM through the Holy Spirit – they received the fullness of the New Covenant.

The NEW Covenant actually came to pass in Acts 2 when Jesus, having ascended, sent back down



everything He was, and everything He did, via the Holy Spirit. When those disciples received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, it was the first time anyone had been born again. It was the fullness of the New Covenant – that was NOT ACCORDING to the Old – coming to pass IN THEM through the indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

### **Old vs. New Covenant**

Under John's baptism, you came to God on the basis of the Old Covenant and received a legal salvation –in the way Abram was declared righteous because he believed God. But note: This, "justification by faith," is LEGAL. It is not LIVING. Being, "declared righteous," doesn't make you righteous. Indeed, being legally IMPUTED with the righteousness of Christ does nothing to actually make you righteous. You still have not been BORN AGAIN. No. You have merely been declared legally righteous.

All of that is wonderful. It is wonderful to be imputed with the righteousness of Christ. It is wonderful to have the spirit of God WITH you. But all of that was UNTO something greater. Rather than merely IMPUT the sinner with a legal righteousness, God intended to IMPART the sinner with Christ Himself – Christ would dwell within us and BE our righteousness. And rather than simply have Christ, through the spirit, WITH us, God intended for Christ to dwell IN US.

None of that was possible under the Old Covenant. No. Christ had to first live, die, be raised, and ascend – and then through the outpouring of the spirit of God come to dwell IN HIS PEOPLE. And when that happened in Acts 2, the New Covenant began. Christ could be our LIFE. EACH believer could have a personal relationship and inward revelation of Him. That is the New Covenant: "Christ in you." (Col. 1:27)

So this brings us full circle. The OT was a type and a shadow of Jesus Christ. Under it, you could be legally saved – by putting your faith in the One and only Passover Lamb, the Messiah. But the NT is the reality of Christ. By putting your faith in Christ, you are not merely legally saved. But you are saved because you are made one with Life Himself.

### **Purpose of the Law**

There is no better passage to illustrate this Truth about the New Covenant than the one found in Romans 3. As we read it remember that one of the terms that we can use to refer to the Old Covenant as a whole is, "the law." And Paul is going to use that term here in Romans 3:

***Now we know that whatever things that the law says, it says to them who are under the law...  
(Rom. 3:19)***

Let's stop right there for a moment. "Whatever the law says...whatever the Old Covenant reveals" -- Paul is now going to tell us the IMPACT is of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is, "speaking." What is it saying? And what is the impact of what it is saying on those who are HEARING?

Paul tells us the impact: "That every mouth might be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

Now note: If you gather up the entirety of the Old Covenant law and ask the question, "What was God's intent and purpose in giving it?– Paul summarizes that answer right here in this verse. He says the purpose of God in the Old Covenant was:

***That every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world might be EXPOSED as guilty before God.***

There you have it. This was God's intent and purpose in giving the law – in giving the Old Covenant: That every mouth might be stopped – that every mouth might STOP talking about our own righteousness. The law was intended to utterly expose our hopelessness in sin before God to the point where we would not have a single word to say about our own righteousness or ability to help ourselves.

How often have you and I ever been told that? How often have we ever been told that the intent and purpose of God in giving his law was to shut our mouth regarding our own righteousness, and to expose us as a completely barren and dead sinner? Unfortunately, what we have been told is that the reason God gave the Old Covenant law was to give us a standard to keep. That is absurd. The whole point that Paul is making is that we cannot keep God's law. Indeed, the more we try, the more our mouth ought to be stopped about our own righteousness.

Now, of course, all of this has an even greater purpose -- and that is, to bring us into the Truth -- not just about ourselves -- but to bring us into the truth of Jesus Christ as the ONLY righteousness, and the ONLY embodiment of grace that God has for us.

God gave the Old Covenant to completely expose us as dead sinners, and to bring us to the end of ourselves. But this was all unto the purpose that we would fall to our knees and receive Jesus Christ solely, "by grace through faith." In other words, rather than give us the means by which we could make ourselves righteous, the law exposes our UNRIGHTEOUSNESS so that we would receive Christ within as our only righteousness.

And then in verse 20, he elaborates:

***Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified.***

To, "be justified," means to be, "declared righteous by God." Paul continues:

***Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight. For by the law comes the KNOWLEDGE of my sin.***

We might even say, "By the law comes the knowledge of my SINFULNESS; my true condition."

This is exactly what we just saw in verse 19 -- that when the law speaks it exposes our true condition before God. The law was given, "to stop every mouth," about our own righteousness, and to show us as being guilty. So again -- the law was given to EXPOSE our sin. That's the, "knowledge of sin," that Paul is talking about in verse 20. "For by the law..." COMES our realization of our need for Jesus Christ.

### **What is Wrong with Man**

It is here that we need to see a fundamental Truth: What is wrong with man is not -- at the core -- found in what he DOES or DOES NOT DO. Not at all. What is wrong with man is found in what he IS -- indeed, what is wrong is found in who he IS in his or her relationship to GOD.

Our works are merely a manifestation of something -- they are a manifestation of what we ARE in our relationship with God. Our works are a manifestation of the fact that we are spiritually dead. So, you have to get past the works to the core problem: We are dead in trespasses and sins. We have no life in us.

If you ask people what is wrong with man they might say, "Well, man is a sinner." But that doesn't really get to the problem. What is wrong with man is that he's dead -- spiritually -- because he's not joined to the Lord. That's the core problem.

I John 3:4 says: "Sin is lawlessness." One translation -- I think it's the King James -- says that, "sin is the transgression of the law." Now, even though that is true, that's not what the Greek text says. It's too shallow; it doesn't get at the real thought of the verse. Sin is the transgression of the law, but this verse is actually saying that, "sin is LAWLESSNESS." "Transgression of the law," is DOING --it is DOING wrong. But, "lawlessness," is BEING. It is a BEING WRONG with God. And that IS the problem that man has --He is alienated from God. That is the KIND of BEING that he IS in Adam.

Sin is a condition or a relationship with God of LAWLESSNESS. How many see -- and this is what Paul is getting at in so many of his explanations -- how many see the folly of trying to take a lawless creature called MAN and trying to fix him with law? You CAN'T fix a lawless creature with law! The problem is he IS lawless! You can't change lawlessness into lawfulness by strapping laws on a person. No. In fact, what will happen if you apply law to a lawless creature is exactly what Paul is saying will happen in verses 19 and 20 here in Romans 3: You apply law to a lawless creature and that law will expose that creature AS lawless, because it'll show the Truth: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It'll show our sin. It'll define it. It'll expose it.

Paul also said, "The law is holy, just, and good." Well, what happens if a human being stands face to face with a HOLY, JUST, and GOOD law? That person will be exposed as unholy, unjust, and bad. Why will that be the result? Because it is the Truth.

Can we see that if we are still trying to keep law to maintain ourselves before the Lord that we are actually deceived? We are NOT seeing the Truth. We are deceived and actually sinning because we are trying to do for ourselves what only Christ can BE IN US.

You cannot fix the Adam race by giving it law. Rather, you have to bring the Adam race to the Cross and have it DIE in Christ. Then, there must be born a brand NEW race; a brand new humanity – the new creation in Christ Jesus. The new creation in Christ is righteous because Christ is righteous, and the new creation is ONE with Christ Himself.

### **Justification By Faith**

God made human beings to live and fellowship with Him forever. But God is holy. He is the very personification of righteousness. Thus, in order for humanity to live and fellowship with God, we must be made compatible with Him – we must be made holy and righteous just as He is holy and righteous.

This is accomplished ONLY through Jesus Christ. But how? One attempt to explain this is through what is known as the doctrine of, "justification by faith." The doctrine of, "justification by faith," states that if we put our faith in Jesus Christ, then God IMPUTES to Christ all of OUR sin, and God imputes to us all of HIS righteousness. Paul talks a lot about that – especially in Romans. He wants to explain LEGALLY how God is able to rightly justify the sinner. Justification by faith is a very true LEGAL explanation of how God is able to declare a sinner righteous because of Jesus Christ.

Now, you will notice that I used the term LEGALLY. Paul works at explaining the redemption from a legal standpoint, because he needs to establish what God is doing as being moral, and legal. It helps us to understand what got accomplished through his Son through His death and resurrection.

But even though Paul does establish the LEGAL Truth of, "justification by faith," he does not limit justification to a LEGAL IMPUTATION. Yes, God does legally IMPUTE to us the righteousness of Jesus

Christ. But Paul goes on to show that God actually IMPARTS to us the Person of Jesus Christ Himself.

Notice the distinction between a legal IMPUTATION and a living IMPARTATION. The first is a legal classification. The second is a living spiritual union.

Is Christianity merely a LEGAL standing before God? No. Christianity is CHRIST IN US – that is, Christianity is a spiritual oneness with God through Christ. When we are saved we are, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) Thus, all that Jesus IS – all of His righteousness – is not only IMPUTED to us, but Christ Himself is IMPARTED to us. We become ONE with Him in spirit. Thus, God does not merely give us a legal righteousness. Rather, Jesus IS our living righteousness.

With regards to the doctrine of, “justification by faith” – God is able to legally declares us righteous because we are one with Righteousness Himself. The IMPARTATION is what makes the legal IMPUTATION to be the Truth.

I Corinthians 1:30 states that, “God has made Christ... to be unto us RIGHTEOUSNESS.” How many see that that's more than just having the righteousness of Jesus LEGALLY IMPUTED to you? No, Christ IS our righteousness. He is our righteousness because He is IN US – we are ONE with Him – and He IS RIGHTEOUSNESS personified.

Earlier we saw that you cannot cure a LAWLESS creature with LAWS. Well, neither can you cure a LAWLESS creature by merely declaring Him righteous. No, because that alone does nothing to actually change him. Rather, you have to MAKE him righteous. This is what God does. He joins us to His Son and IN CHRIST the believer becomes the righteousness of God, that is, Christ becomes the righteousness of the believer. And that is why God is

perfectly just to likewise declare the believer legally righteous.

This is an incredible blessing to realize. It is incredible to realize that God merely given us a legal righteousness. Rather, God has given us CHRIST HIMSELF who is righteousness personified. It means that you cannot add to, or subtract from, the righteousness who is a Person by anything you do, or don't do.

### **Righteousness Apart From Works**

Thus far in Romans 3, Paul has stated the purpose of the law: To expose us all as sinners and to shut our mouth about our own righteousness – but all unto the purpose that we might put our faith in Christ and receive HIM as our righteousness, indeed, as our ALL. Now, Paul continues in Romans 3:21:

***But now the righteousness of God APART FROM the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.***

Focus in on the phrase, “But now the righteousness of God APART FROM the law is manifested.” The words translated, “apart from,” are quite dramatic. They picture a HUGE CHASM. In short, what Paul is saying is this:

***But now the righteousness of God and law-keeping are separated as if by a huge chasm. The righteousness which is now made manifest is the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all who believe.***

In one sentence Paul completely separates good works and law keeping from any connection to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Of course. His whole



point is that works cannot add to, or subtract from, the righteousness that has been given to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. We cannot add to, or subtract from, Christ as our only righteousness any more than we can add to, or subtract from, Christ Himself – by our works.

The words of the apostle Paul in this passage are fundamental to the gospel of grace. He is saying that there is no connection whatsoever between our works and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are one in spirit with Christ, and thus joined to Him as our righteousness, completely independent of our works.

We have got to understand this -- that it all comes back to Jesus Christ IN US. Romans 3:22 states what we need to do: We need to, yes, believe that this is TRUE – but more than that – we need to actually take all of our faith off of ourselves and our works, and put it upon Jesus Christ as an act that is independent of our works. In other words, if we fail, Christ is our righteousness. If we succeed, Christ is our righteousness. Nothing can change this Truth. We need to believe it and live from out of it by faith.

### **All in Christ By Grace**

The Truth that Christ is our righteousness – the Truth about law vs. grace – is not merely a theological concept. It is the Truth because of the Person Jesus Christ IN US. If you are saved you are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17) That is how Jesus Christ dwells IN you. (Col. 1:27) And if Christ is in you, then God has made Him to be unto you and I ALL THINGS.

***But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. (I Cor. 1:30-31)***

Can we see that GRACE is not merely a THING that God gives us? No. Grace is Person. Grace and Truth come to be in you through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

Now, from this Truth we can also see another related Truth -- and it's a Truth that would revolutionize our entire Christian walk if we would just see it and believe it. And that Truth is this -- and I'll put it in the form of a question: When you received Jesus Christ, did you, or did you not, receive Him 100% fully and solely by the grace of God? I would hope most of us would answer a resounding YES -- we received Jesus by grace, and grace alone. But once we have that settled, then notice Romans 8:32:

***He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?***

God has FREELY given us His Son. But because God has FREELY given us His Son, then it follows that God has freely given ALL things that are IN His Son. And what is in His Son? All things. God has given all that He has to give in Christ. There is nothing that God has to give that is given any other way. God has truly FREELY given humanity all things that He has to give in His Son Jesus Christ -- and Christ dwells IN US. It is not only an inescapable Truth -- but it IS the gospel. It is the New Covenant.

Now add another verse:

***In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)***

There is that word again: ALL. ALL of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are HID IN CHRIST. Notice what this means: It means that if we are to discover and experience what God has given in Christ -- what God has HID in Christ -- we must discover and experience Christ Himself. God has not given anything as an, "add-on," to Christ. He has not

given a little of what He has to give in Christ at salvation, only to give more later through another experience. No. God has freely given us all things in Christ – they are, as it were, “hid,” in Him. As we come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ we will discover all that God has given in Him.

This ought to save us a lot of confusion. It means that when you are saved and joined to the Lord you receive ALL of Christ, and thus, ALL that is IN HIM. There is no need to ask God to give you MORE. There is no more. No. Rather the Christian life is supposed to be one of discovering and experiencing the Christ we have received in fullness by the grace of God.

### **Freely Given and Received**

This great Truth of God’s grace in Christ ought to set us free of any notion that we can earn, merit, or maintain anything through our works. No. Rather than work to become righteous, we are to work because of His righteousness. Rather than work to receive, we are to work because we have received.

Jesus said to His disciples:

***Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:8)***

God has freely given the human race His Son -- and has freely given the human race all things in Christ. By faith we are to freely receive. There is simply no other way to walk in the Truth. But then if we have seen this Truth we will freely give. Could there be a clearer statement to the effect that all that is of God is by His grace?

The Truth contained in this one verse, Matthew 10:8, would be enough to revolutionize our lives if we would grasp it. God has given us ALL things freely by His grace – but IN CHRIST. Thus, if we want to experience what God has given we must experience

Christ. And if we experience Christ, we will be changed by His grace into those who manifest and practice grace.

This speaks of God's great eternal purpose. God wants to create people in Christ Jesus who can be trusted with His possessions – and who will be faithful to Him over them. He wants believers who will freely receive what He freely gives – and the only way this is possible is if we are brought to the end of our own righteousness. A person who has nothing in themselves will freely receive what God freely gives because they will know that this is the only way possible TO receive from God. And that grace will transform such ones into those who will freely live for God.

### **The Type and Shadow of Circumcision**

All through his epistles, Paul appeals to the types and shadows found in the OT. He shows that God was revealing in these types and shadows much NT Truth in Christ.

One common type and shadow to which Paul refers often is that of circumcision. Circumcision was more than just another OT rite. It was, in fact, the very SIGN that a person was under the Old Covenant. It was the OT correspondence to the NT Cross of Jesus Christ.

Now, of course, many have tried to make circumcision correspond to baptism. But this is only correct if we realize that baptism is also a type and shadow of the Cross of Jesus Christ: We are baptized into His death – in other words, we are crucified with Christ.

Paul refers to circumcision in Galatians. He says,

***Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope***

***of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ  
neither circumcision avails anything, nor  
uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.  
(Gal. 5:5-6)***

***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the  
cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world  
is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in  
Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything,  
nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Gal.  
6:14-15)***

Now, if we keep in mind the importance of circumcision – it was THE sign that you were under the Old Covenant – we will realize the revolutionary statement Paul is making. He is essentially saying that the Old Covenant is no longer in effect. To be circumcised means NOTHING. To be uncircumcised means NOTHING. What does matter is that you are IN CHRIST JESUS – and that He is your life.

But there is something even deeper here. As we all know, circumcision was a, “cutting off,” of the flesh – it was the, “cutting off,” of the flesh of the body part that reproduced the Adam race. Therefore, by circumcision, God was, through type and shadow, pointing to the fact that under the New Covenant the old man in Adam would be, “cut off,” through death. The old creation was no longer going to reproduce itself. No. All of that old creation would end. In Christ, God would birth a new creation.

If we look again at the words of Paul in the original Greek we get an insight into this Truth:

***Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new  
creature: old things are passed over. Behold, all  
things are become new. And all things (that are of  
this new creation) are out from God. (II Cor. 5:17)***

Paul is again stating that God has fully passed over the OLD creation in birthing the new creation in Christ Jesus. What this means is that the NEW creation is

NOT the OLD creation fixed, repaired, and made to, “look like Jesus.” No. Rather, NOTHING of the NEW creation is from out of the OLD. Rather, all of the NEW creation is from out of Christ.

This means that when we are joined to Jesus Christ and become one with Him in spirit that HE brings all of the life and value. There is no need for us to focus upon OUR value, and OUR worth, and OUR greatness – there is NONE. We are merely recipients of His grace in Christ. The new creation is a spiritual union where God has passed over the old creation, and in which Jesus Christ is the life. God is creating human beings brand new IN Christ Jesus. He is not fixing up the old. Rather He is putting it under the death of the Cross.

This, “cutting off,” of the old creation is what is pictured in circumcision. There is to be NO perpetuation of the fallen Adam creature that we are. No. All that ended at the Cross.

### **The Circumcision**

With this as a background we can understand what Paul is getting at in Philippians 3. There he says:

***For we are the circumcision. (Phil. 3:3)***

Paul is saying that believers are those who are new creations in Christ Jesus – and are therefore those whose old man in Adam has been, “cut off.” But then he describes the characteristics of, “the circumcision.” He says:

***Who worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh.***

Herein we see exactly the same distinction we saw in comparing the OT to the NT. The OT was a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. Likewise, circumcision is a type and shadow of the death of the old man in Adam in the Cross of Jesus Christ – it is the first

evidence or sign that you are a believer – you are crucified with Christ. Your life proclaims, “Yet not I, but Christ!” (see Gal. 2:20) Those who are, “the circumcision,” have had their, “confidence,” or, “faith,” in themselves broken. They have now seen the Truth and have all of their faith and worship focused in Christ.

How many see that, “the circumcision,” have been thoroughly exposed by the law and have, as a result, brought their old man to the Cross? They have taken their place in His Cross – they have been planted into His death -- and had their flesh CUT OFF. But they have likewise been raised in Him as new creations. They worship God, not with their flesh, but in spirit. They rejoice, not in themselves, or in their works, but in Jesus Christ.

Now, what we see in all of this is gathered up in that one verse quoted above from Galatians 2. “The circumcised,” are those whose life proclaims, “Yet not I, but Christ.” Their faith is NOT in anything about themselves – but only in Christ.

### **To Be Found in Him**

In Philippians 3, Paul tells the story of how he lost his life for the sake of Jesus Christ. Certainly, he did lose THINGS. But above all, he lost HIMSELF. And central to Paul losing himself is the fact that he lost his OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

He begins his story with the verse just quoted:

***For we are the circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:3)***

Can we see that before Paul shares his experience that he is giving the outcome: We are the circumcision? In other words, everything that circumcision represented in type and shadow we have experienced and manifest. And the end result is that,

“we worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

How did Paul come to this point? He tells us. He says:

***Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (Phil. 3:4-7)***

Paul rehearses all of the spiritual credentials and assets that he believed he had as a Pharisee. You will note that there is not one SIN on this list. No. These are all aspects of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. And yet Paul states that he LOST them all. Paul the apostle had to lose everything about himself that he might have otherwise used to maintain his own righteousness before God.

There is simply NO other path for any of us if we want to walk in the Truth and experience Jesus Christ. Jesus said:

***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)***

If we must LOSE our lives – our entire SELF – to Jesus Christ by faith – then it is certain that we are to lose our self-righteousness – for self-righteousness is central to the old Adam life that Jesus says we must lose in order to come after Him. The folly of trying to follow Jesus Christ on the basis of our own



righteousness ought to be evident – and yet most of us do it for years before God wakes us up.

So, Paul had to lose everything about himself that he might have thought was righteous. How many see that this is not merely a matter of Paul, “doing what he was supposed to do?” No. It was a matter of seeing the TRUTH. There is NO righteousness in any of us. Thus, if we want to see the Truth this will be what we see and we must, by faith, lose it.

Losing himself and his own righteousness was an eternal crisis point for the apostle Paul. Indeed, he tells us what happened:

***Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Phil. 3:8-9)***

Note what Paul is saying: He lost himself to Christ FOR THE SAKE of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. In other words, when he lost HIS life and found Christ as His life – he likewise received LIGHT. He received a revelation within of Christ that would have been impossible otherwise.

John writes, “In Him was LIFE and that LIFE was the LIGHT of men.” (John 1:4) If we will lose ourselves to Jesus Christ by faith we will find ALL of Him. He IS the life, and He IS the light. Find Him as your life and you will receive LIGHT.

Do we want to know Christ? To receive an inward revelation of Him? Then we must LOSE our life to Him. There is no other way.

But Paul continues. He says that yes, I received a great revelation of Christ – I began to come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. But fundamental to this revelation of Christ was the following:

***That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.***

Paul not only found Christ – found Christ as his life – but he was FOUND IN CHRIST. He discovered what it really means to be IN CHRIST. It means to be set free from his own righteousness because you have seen that Christ IS your righteousness. In other words, you have seen the Truth of grace; the reality of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus.

In the words of Paul in Philippians 3 we find the same Truth as spoken by Jesus in Matthew. Jesus said we must lose our lives to find them – to find HIM as our life. And Paul said that he suffered the loss of all things – of all things about himself – and he found then found in Christ. This is where God wants to bring us. It is what Christianity and the grace of God are all about.

Can we see that the grace of God is not merely a doctrine in which we must believe? No. It is essentially CHRIST IN US.

### **Not Under Law, But Grace**

It would seem that one of the most difficult concepts for believers to grasp is the difference between being, “under the law,” and, “under grace.” In fact, even if a person does rightly interpret the theology of the Bible on this matter, many times the understanding exactly that: Purely theological. But a doctrinal or theological understand will not get us far. It does not equal what the Bible calls, “the knowledge of God.” It does not equal an inward realization of Jesus Christ. It does not help us actually experience the grace of

God, nor does it free us from legalism. In short, it is one thing to know what the Bible says. But it is another to know the One who inspired it – and to be changed in our relationship with Him over to those who OBEY THE TRUTH.

If we look at two passages together we will find some clarity on this matter of law and grace:

***Now we know that whatever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Rom. 3:19)***

***For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (Rom. 6:14-15)***

From these two passages we learn a couple of things. First, a saved person is NOT under the law. Rather, they are under grace. Second, whatever the law says it says only to those under the law – and NOT to those under grace. That means that the law is NOT speaking to those under grace. Third, being under grace rather than under the law does not lead to sin – in fact, being under grace sets us free from sin.

If you read and understand what Paul is saying in these verses, the conclusion is clear: The law of God is no longer speaking to those under grace. In other words, the law of God cannot COMMAND those under grace. But because the law cannot command those under grace, neither can the law CONDEMN those under grace for their sin; for falling short of the law's demands. Add all of this up and it means that we are FREE from the law – not, “under the law.”

To natural religious thinking, if we are free from what the law commands this will mean that we can, “sin because we know grace abounds.” Isn't that exactly what every legalist says will happen? We

have all heard this protest since we were kids – from our own brains and from others. We have heard that if you and I are not commanded by God's law, and condemned for our failures, and blessed for our obedience, that we will have nothing, "to keep us in line." We will be able to cast off all restraint and sin as we please – saying that we are free to sin because we are under grace.

Well, first of all, we do not have to worry about anyone using such nonsense as an excuse to start sinning. Why? Because none of us have ever STOPPED sinning. You and I sin every day. Indeed, if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

If we really understood the Truth, and if we fall in love with Jesus Christ, then we are not going to try to use the grace of God as a license to sin. Rather, if we have truly repented of sin and have received the grace of God, the result will be a growing freedom from sin – and a desire to obey God.

Can we see that we are talking here about an inward relationship of faith in Jesus Christ? That this change of heart cannot be accomplished merely by theology? No. If a person is born from above, has received the grace of God, and is coming into a realization of Jesus Christ – yes, they will sin – but they will not want to sin. They will want to obey God. And as they progress in their walk with Christ, they will experience more and more freedom FROM sin.

The notion that unless we are under the law – kept in line by condemnation or promise of blessing – that we will live in sin is nonsense. We have already seen that the purpose of God's law was to expose our sin; to manifest the fact that we are dead sinners – so that we will fall to our knees and put our faith in Christ. Does that sound like God intends for the law to keep us in line?

Being under the law does NOT keep people from sinning. Actually, it results in them sinning all the more. Why? Because if you are living under the law you are living in deception. You are not living by faith in Christ. That will hardly result in freedom from sin. Rather, it will be a life lived in unbelief – which is the greatest sin of all.

On the other hand, if we live as those UNDER GRACE, this will not result in people sinning. Rather, because being under grace we will love Christ all the more.

The dynamics of being under the law or under grace speak of a relationship – or lack therefore – with God through Jesus Christ. This is not about a BELIEF SYSTEM or about a theological construct. It is about whether I have seen and embraced the Truth.

These may be hard words for some – but if I continue to preach law it is evidence that I have not seen my own barrenness. It is evidence that I have not realized the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is evidence of these things because if I have seen the Truth I would realize that preaching law is death, and that I am set free from the law of sin and death by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

### **Why Obey God?**

If I am, “under the law,” there are going to be characteristics of such a walk. First, I am going to listen to what the law says. Second, I am going to obey what the law says. But behind my obedience will be a motivation. I will obey God to either avoid bad consequences, or merit good consequences. Those consequences may be in the present, or they may be in the future – even in the eternal ages. But when everything is said and done, being, “under the law,” means that I obey what the law says because it PAYS ME TO. I am keeping my standing with God. I am earning a greater reward. I am maintaining my own righteousness.

But what is wrong with obeying God for those reasons? Nothing would be wrong with it if the goal of the Christian life was to obey the law, and by doing so, accomplish those goals. But this is NOT the goal of the Christian life. The goal of the Christian life is to come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, and in doing so, receive all that God has given in Him by GRACE. The goal is RELATIONSHIP – not with the law, and not with God THROUGH the law – but the goal is relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

For example, why should I refuse to steal? To avoid the consequences? To earn a reward from God? To keep right with God and keep myself righteous? Nonsense. If those are the reasons I obey the command, “Thou shall not steal,” then what does it say about my heart relationship with God or faith in Christ? Any unbeliever can refuse to steal and obey that commandment because it pays him to. But the reason a believer is supposed to refuse to steal is because we love God. It is because there is no dishonesty possible if we are walking with Jesus Christ.

Now, if you look at this, you will see that the outward conduct in both cases is the same: The person refuses to steal. But the one person refuses to steal because the law commands it – and they do not want to come under condemnation, and they do not want to lose any reward. They want to keep themselves righteous. In other words, they believe – even as a saved person – that it is in their best interest to obey God. So, despite the outward conduct that obeys God, they are actually deceived. They may mechanically be going through the motions of obedience, but they are NOT obeying the Truth.

In I Peter 1:22, Peter speaks of, “obeying the Truth.” How many realize that, “obeying the Truth,” is much bigger than merely obeying law? Sure. Obeying the Truth includes even our faith and

knowledge of God. Thus, outward conduct must be governed by inward faith; must be governed by a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is where the Galatians failed. They obeyed the law. But their motive was to keep themselves right with God. This really mean they were NOT obeying the Truth – but in fact disobeying it. You can do lots of good things, but if you are doing it from out of unbelief and deception, even your good works constitute disobedience to the Truth.

A saved person needs to obey God and refuse to steal because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Self-interest is not a consideration. Personal righteousness is not a consideration because Christ is their righteousness. Escaping condemnation is not a consideration because, “there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” (Rom.8:1) And earning something from God is not a consideration because they know that God has already given them all things freely in Christ Jesus. Therefore, they are absolutely FREE to obey God without a personal stake in the matter – they are free to walk with Christ by, “faith working through love.”

Can we see how utterly impossible it is to actually, “obey the Truth,” unless we are at least in the process of growing to realize Jesus Christ? Otherwise, we might do many supposedly good works. But if we are doing them in blindness and unbelief we are nevertheless, as the Galatians, under, “another gospel” – we are UNDER THE LAW.

We have seen how God set the apostle Paul free from being, “under the law.” God did not merely supply Paul with some Bible doctrine. No. God put Paul under the work of the Cross such that Paul had to lose himself and all of his righteousness. This is how God sets us free – He shows us the Truth about ourselves. And if we see the Truth we will forever be set free of trying to keep ourselves righteous through law-keeping. We will live in the grace of God.

## **The Absolute of Grace**

There are two passages that reveal the absolute Truth about the grace of God. The first is one quoted above:

***There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1)***

Right up front, we need to clear up a common misinterpretation of this verse. Paul is NOT saying that condemnation is contingent upon whether we walk in the flesh or spirit. Many believers have wrongly assumed this – they have assumed that Paul is saying that there is no condemnation for those in Christ – but only if you walk after the spirit. If you walk after the flesh, then they say there is condemnation. This is complete nonsense. If that is the case, then we are right back under the law – our works; whether we walk in the spirit or the flesh – is determining whether we are condemned. This is not the Truth.

No. What Paul is saying is that there is NEVER any condemnation for those in Christ – and that those who are in Christ are those who walk in the spirit and not in the flesh. Of course, he is speaking ideally, and assuming that those he is describing are walking with Christ by faith.

Now, that being said, we must ask a related question about this verse: What exactly does Paul mean that there is NO condemnation for those in Christ Jesus? There can only be two possible answers:

**Paul means there is NO condemnation EXCEPT when we sin.**

**OR**



**Paul means that there is NO condemnation EVEN when we sin.**

Can we see this? It is really the same question as to whether condemnation depends upon walking in the spirit or the flesh.

So, what is the answer? If Paul means that there is NO condemnation EXCEPT when we sin, can we see that we are, “under the law?” Can we see that our works are determining God’s condemnation, grace, acceptance, and love for us? Yep. If there is no condemnation EXCEPT when we sin then there IS condemnation possible for a believer. And if that is the case, then salvation itself is based on works – for you cannot have a condemned saved person! In addition, it means that there is NO finished work of Christ.

The answer is that there is NO condemnation – there is NEVER any condemnation whatsoever – EVEN when we sin. Does that seem too good to be true? Well, it is the Truth. Do you know why? Because if we are in Christ, we are in the One who bore on the Cross all sin and all condemnation. IT IS FINISHED. On the Cross, Jesus bore the Adam race – which is THE RACE upon which all condemnation applied – and Jesus died in our place. In short, there is no condemnation for sin that is unsatisfied – the just requirements of all law have been satisfied. That is why Paul is able to add in Romans 8:

***There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, 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. (Rom. 8:1-4)***

If you are in Christ, God will not approve when you sin. God may chastise you to teach you the Truth. But condemnation is NOT possible for those in Christ because Jesus Christ is their life and their righteousness. And nothing we DO can add or subtract from HIM and His eternally finished work.

The second verse that shows the absolute of grace is found in Romans:

***What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (Romans 6:1)***

Paul is asking a rhetorical question. But it is a statement of Truth in question form. He is stating that grace always DOES abound when we sin. Can we see that? He is saying, "Grace always abounds – even when we sin. But does this mean that we ought to continue in sin because grace abounds?" And of course he answers, "God forbid."

Now, if we take Paul's statement of Truth and apply the same argument as we did with regards to condemnation from Romans 8, we are left with only two possibilities:

**Paul means grace always abounds-- EXCEPT when we sin.**

**OR**

**Paul means that grace always abounds -- EVEN when we sin.**

The gospel of grace in Christ Jesus is clear on this matter: Grace always abounds EVEN when we sin. There should be no question on this matter. For if grace does NOT abound EVEN when we sin, then grace is meaningless. For if grace does not abound EVEN when we sin, then when does it abound? When we obey? Believers are UNDER GRACE – thus whether we obey or sin grace DOES

abound. And even though we always need God's grace, if grace does not abound EVEN when we sin then it really does not abound at all.

Of course, Paul's rhetorical question points out the common objection to the Truth of grace that is presented by those who are blind to this Truth. They state, "If grace abounds EVEN when we sin, then we are free to sin – because grace always abounds!" To this Paul says, "God forbid!" But then he states WHY believers will not sin because grace abounds: "Those who are baptized into Jesus Christ are baptized into His death." He says, "He that is dead is freed from sin."

Those who are blind to the Truth believe that the law, "keeps us in line." They believe that law-keeping keeps us in God's grace and in His favor. Of course, this is the ONLY option if grace does not always abound EVEN when we sin – for if grace does not abound EVEN when we sin then our obedience must keep us in grace. But the Truth on this matter is completely outside of such thinking. Paul says that those who are in Christ will NOT, "sin because grace abounds" – because those who are in Christ are, "dead to sin."

Now, before we continue, let us be clear: Those who are in Christ are going to sin – to say otherwise is deception. And when they do sin grace ALWAYS abounds. The believer is FOREVER under grace, and never again under the law. But despite the fact that grace always abounds for the believer – EVEN when we sin – the believer is one who has died in Christ. Believers are those who have been planted into Christ and are one with Him in spirit. Thus, the grace of God is settled for the believer. There is never any condemnation – and grace always abounds. NONE of this is based on works. These Truths are based upon the Person of Jesus Christ and His finished work.

If a person's faith in Christ is merely religious, then they are not REALLY, "dead to sin," or, "alive to God."

No. In that case, they will try to live according to laws and principles from out of their earthly nature. They may call this by other terms, but this is what they will be doing; it is all they can do if they are not living from out of Christ as their life. They might deceive themselves into thinking they are doing a good job. But even THAT is sin and deception because it is not of faith, but of self-righteousness.

Faith in Christ is the outcome of a broken faith in ourselves. It is the outcome of being exposed as utterly dead in sin. Thus, if my conversion and my faith is real, it is based upon an experiencing of the Truth about myself and about Christ. I will have come to the point where I LOSE myself to Jesus; where I have come and taken my place in His Cross. I will be planted in Christ – and I will begin to experience Him as my life. This does not mean I will not sin. But I won't want to sin. I will have a desire to obey God. But even when I do sin my faith will remain in Christ and will not be in myself.

Paul said:

***I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”***  
***(Gal. 2:20)***

Can we see that despite the possibilities of sin for each believer that the believer's entire faith is upon Christ, and not upon themselves? Can we see that the life of the believer is the life of Christ? This is the outcome of the new birth. It is the reality of, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) It is what happens when a person is born from above.

It is virtually impossible to explain to a person who is occupied with themselves and with their works – who thinks that this is Christianity – it is almost impossible to explain to such a one what it means to be born from above. They have no experience of

Christ. The difficulty is not intelligence or an inability to grasp Biblical doctrine. They probably KNOW all the verses that speak of the new birth. Rather, the difficulty is that folks do not know Jesus Christ – they have not seen their own sin, and they have not seen the grace of God.

Paul the apostle continually encountered this blindness in religious people. He did argue with them from scripture. But in the end he said that the answer was:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)***

Each believer must be set free from self-occupation – set free from occupation of what we ARE and what we DO. And the only way this can happen is NOT by fighting self-occupation – it can happen only if the believer is brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – if Christ is FORMED in the individual. If we begin to come into a realization of Jesus we will begin to see the utter futility of being occupied with that which is DEAD – and we will begin to see the Truth of Who Christ is and what He has done. The Truth will indeed set us free.

If a person truly comes to see Jesus Christ then that person is going to fall in love with Christ. There will be a growing apprehension of God's grace and of Who He is. That person, having FREELY received what God has FREELY given, will then be changed – they will be changed by grace. Obedience will then become voluntary and from the heart by faith.

All obedience in the Christian life is supposed to be the outcome of seeing the Truth in Christ – and of being rightly related to Him by FAITH. It is never to be the outcome of trying to making oneself right with God, or the outcome of trying to earn from God. Those motivations are unbelief – they are contrary to a walk by faith.

Is this not the distinction between the two Covenants? The Old Covenant – as a type and shadow of Christ – could perfect no one. It could not give anyone LIFE. It could not fix the old creation. But the New Covenant was inward – it is, “Christ in you.” Much of Paul’s ministry was focused on getting believers to see the Truth of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

### **The Inheritance**

Even in the physical world, inheritance is not obtained by works. It is obtained by BIRTH. Through His finished work, Jesus Christ obtained all the inheritance of God – that is – God has given to Christ all that He has to give. But under the New Covenant, those who are born from above – those who are IN CHRIST – are coheirs with Him.

We must be clear about what it means to be a coheir with Christ. It does NOT mean that we receive a small piece of inheritance while Christ received the big piece. No. It means we receive in Christ all that Christ has received. To put it another way, God has not given us an inheritance of our own. Rather, God has given us Christ in Whom is all inheritance.

God has an inheritance for His people. But in the final analysis, Christ Himself is our inheritance. Yet all that God has for us is found IN HIM.

God has freely given believers ALL THINGS in Christ. But again – this is not a matter of God giving us things BECAUSE OF Christ, or in ADDITION TO Christ. No. Rather, than give us THINGS or give us an inheritance, God has given us Christ in Whom is ALL that God has to give humanity. Indeed, there is nothing God has to give humanity outside of His Son.

Under the New Covenant, the only way in which humanity can obtain and experience what God has to give is by experiencing the Person of Jesus Christ. We must be born from above and joined to the Lord

and become one spirit with Him. Then HE is our life – and just as He has all that God has given – so do we have all that God has given, by grace, solely in Christ.

Paul explained to the Galatians this great Truth – that God has given all in Christ – but that because believers are IN CHRIST – then we are coheirs in Him:

***Now to Abraham and his SEED were the promises made. He said not, “and to SEEDS” -- as of many -  
- but as to one: “And to your SEED,” which is  
Christ. (Gal. 3:16)***

We must be clear on this Truth. The SEED OF ABRAHAM inherits all that God promised to Abraham – which, spiritually, is ALL that God has to give. Paul is directly stating that there are NOT many SEEDS of Abraham. There is only ONE SEED of Abraham: The Person of Jesus Christ is the one and only seed of Abraham.”

Paul goes on to say:

***And this I say, that the covenant, that was  
confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which  
was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot  
disannul, that it should make the promise of none  
effect. (Gal. 3:17)***

Paul is saying that even though the Old Covenant was given by God that it did nothing to ANNUL the promise that God gave to Abraham. The promise that the seed of Abraham would receive the inheritance stand. Nothing can change.

Paul then adds:

***For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more  
of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by  
promise. (Gal. 3:18)***

How clear this is! Inheritance – which includes eternal life, and all else that is of God; which includes all that God has to give humanity – was NEVER possible through law-keeping. It was possible on through BIRTH – the inheritance was promised only to the SEED OF ABRAHAM, which Paul has already told us is Jesus Christ.

But then why was the law given? Paul answers:

***Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 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. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Gal. 3:19-25)***

Paul takes us right back to what we saw earlier was the purpose for which God gave the Old Covenant law: To expose sin. To show us our utter inability to be right with God. The law was, “added,” because man was blind to his condition. The law brings the knowledge of man’s sin – so that humanity will turn to Christ through grace.

***For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then***



***are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)***

Paul concludes this passage. He tells us that if we are baptized into Christ – if we are made one with Jesus Christ in spirit – then we are children of God IN CHRIST. And this means that IN CHRIST we are, “Abraham’s seed.” We are not Abraham’s seed in addition to Christ, and not Abraham’s seed merely, “because of,” Christ. No. Rather, we are Abraham’s seed in Christ, that is, because Jesus Christ is the ONE seed of Abraham, and we are one with Him, that makes us jointly IN CHRIST, “the seed of Abraham” – and coheirs in Christ in all that God has to give.

None of this was possible under the Old Covenant. No one could be born from above in Christ under the Old Covenant. But this is precisely what happens under the New Covenant. We are delivered from the Adam race by being planted into His death but made one with Christ in His life by being planted into His resurrection. This makes us one with Christ Himself, and as a result, makes us those who inherit in Christ all that Christ is, and all that Christ was won.

**That Word Again: FREELY**

The purpose of God for His people is not merely salvation. Salvation is only the beginning. God has saved His people for a PURPOSE. All that God has given in Christ is unto the purpose that in the eternal ages His people might live and act as extensions of Himself. He wants a people that are in such harmony with Him that they will be and do His will.

This purpose has a direct relationship to GRACE. God wants people who can FREELY receive what He has FREELY given – and then FREELY give to others.

But again – note the word, “freely.” Our problem is that we will not FREELY receive. We keep trying to find something in ourselves that will merit what God has FREELY given. And to the extent that we do that

we are in unbelief. We are walking in error. The only solution is for us to embrace the Truth about ourselves that God will reveal – that we are NOTHING – but that God has freely given us all things solely IN His Son.

Many believers continue to think that what Adam lost in the fall was something good that was in himself – something of light and life. No. What Adam lost was GOD. God never made humanity to have anything in ourselves – no life, no light, and no righteousness. ALL of that was freely given by virtue of union in spirit with God. Thus, redemption is not the restoration of something God put in man. Rather, it is the restoration of man back to God Himself -- through Jesus Christ. We receive Christ and all that God has given in Him solely by grace. This is the New Covenant.

We will never freely receive by faith what God has given if we still think that there is something good in ourselves. In that case, we will be in darkness.

To be able to freely receive what God has freely given – to God's glory – is an incredible thing. Yet this is the kind of people that God wants to create in Christ Jesus. It is the ultimate outcome of the New Covenant – that Jesus Christ would live in, and be glorified by, those who are IN HIM.

### **God's Desire and Purpose**

All through the NT the epistles express God's desire for His people. This is especially the case in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians:

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (Eph. 1:3)***

***That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on***

**earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Eph. 1:10-12)**

**And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:**

**<sup>7</sup> That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.**

**<sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:**

**<sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

**<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:6-10)**

**Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Eph. 1:16-21)**

All of these wonderful purposes and goals of God for His people are what is behind the New Covenant. The New Covenant is not merely a Covenant of grace. It is a Covenant of Christ the Person – and of God's promise that in Christ we can be coheirs throughout the eternal ages.