

Law and Grace

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FOREWORD.

THE importance of the subject dealt with in this Manual cannot be overrated. The well known maxims "*quid pro quo*" and "nothing for nothing" accord with our natural thoughts, and regulate most things under the sun, but they beget groans and weariness in the soul. Grace, on the other hand, is heavenly in its origin, it is therefore slowly learned, but when learned, even in small measure, "is a charming sound, harmonious to the ear". It begets rest, and peace, and joy.

We must always be careful not to allow the Law of God to be lowered in our esteem. There is no flaw or failure in it; on the contrary, our thoughts about its excellency need to be realised. It is "holy, and just, and good", our Lord "magnified and made it honourable". He did not destroy the Law, He met all its claims on Himself by observing it, and on us by dying on the Cross. Not one iota of its demands were lessened for Him; His death paid them all in full measure.

Let us be clear that the unsuitability of the Law to our case as sinners was owing entirely to the desperateness of that case. The fault was in us, not in the Law, and this equally applies to the case of the Christian. If the Law could not give life neither can it preserve that life. The Christian is not under Law, but this does not set Law aside or discredit it for its original purpose. He is under Grace now, and that is a higher standard.

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LAW AND GRACE.

“The Law was given Grace and Truth came
by Moses, but by Jesus Christ”
(John 1. 17) .

“ As many as are of the
works of the Law are under
the curse: for it is written,
Cursed is every one that
continueth not in all
things which are written
in the Book of the Law
to do them” (Gal. 3. 10) .

“ Christ hath redeemed
us from the curse of the
Law, being made a curse
for us: for it is written,
Cursed is every one that
hangeth on a tree ”
(Gal. 3. 13) .

NO two things in the world ought to be more carefully distinguished than Law and Grace, and yet no two things are more generally confused. They are as far asunder as Mount Sinai and the “place called Calvary”, and can no more mingle than the iron and clay of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream-statue. Men may choose which they will, they cannot have both. They must keep the Law perfectly without Grace, or be saved by Grace perfectly without Law. “If by Grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more Grace: otherwise work is no more

work'' (Rom. 11. 6). "By Grace are ye saved through faith;..not of works, lest any man should boast'' (Eph. 2. 8, 9).

Law commands: Grace bestows. Law curses: Grace blesses. Law demands love, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; Grace proclaims Love, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son". Law requires man to *come up* to its standard; Grace *comes down* where men are. Law says 'Do!' for "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man that doeth those things shall live by them"; Grace says 'Done!' for "Christ is the *end* of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth'' (Rom. 10. 4, 5).

Who could hesitate in his choice? and yet strange to say the natural heart prefers Law to Grace or rather a mixture of both. Man promises to do his best if God will be merciful and do the rest. That he cannot earn God's favour offends his self-esteem; that God should offer him His best gifts 'without money and without price' contradicts his experience of the world and its ways. The Grace of God is so wonderful and infinite that the human mind can only grasp it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Happy are they who learn that 'in us dwelleth no good thing', and that "the gift of God..is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'' to the least deserving and most guilty.

PART I.—LAW.

“The Law was given by Moses.” We may consider the Law under the following heads:

- I. What does it mean?
- II. To whom was it given?
- III. Under what circumstances was it given?
- IV. With what object was it given?

I. The Meaning of the Law.

It is understood that “The Law” we are considering is the Law given by Jehovah from Sinai, that is, the great legal system contained in the Pentateuch, taken as a whole, one, and indivisible, with its seventy times seven enactments, both moral and ceremonial. When we read that the believer “has died to the Law” (Rom. 7. 4; Gal. 2. 19), and that he is “not under the Law” (Rom. 6. 14), it is the Sinaitic Law which is meant. This is important, as the word occurs in various senses in the Scriptures and in common speech, and confusion has arisen from not distinguishing them. We speak for instance of ‘common law’, meaning the law of the land, and of the ‘laws of nature’, meaning the principles on which God usually orders the universe. Clearly it would be wrong to say that the believer is not subject to such laws as these. If a Christian violates the laws of health or the laws of his country, he must take the con-

sequences. The light of conscience is also said to be a law to "the Gentiles, which have not the Law" (*i.e.*, the Law of Moses), "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2. 14, 15), and of course men cannot ignore conscience. "Law" is also used to describe the workings of certain principles in the moral government of God, as in the words "the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the Law of sin and death" (Rom. 8. 2). This principle of liberty stands in marked contrast with the Law of Moses, which cannot deliver any man from either sin or death.

The next question to be considered is:

II. To Whom was the Law Given?

The first words of Exodus 20 provide the answer, the Law was given to Israel. "God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," and Deuteronomy 6. 4, quoted by the Lord Jesus in Mark 12. 29, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord".

If men to-day, though never placed by God under the Law, still try in spite of Israel's terrible failure to be justified by the Law, let them remember that God does not prescribe any lower standard for them than He did for Israel—perfect obedience from

first to last. Thus when the Judaizing teachers of the primitive Church endeavoured to bring the Gentile converts under Law, the words of Peter were emphatic: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"? (Acts 15. 10). But though God did not give the Law to the Gentiles, He did not leave them without a witness. They see the works of creation around (Rom. 1. 20), they hear the voice of conscience within, and now in these days of Gospel preaching 'the Word of God is nigh' them (see Rom. 10. 8, 9)

III. Under what Circumstances was the Law Given?

God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt on the ground of the covenant of Grace made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 6. 5, 8). And from the brick kilns of Egypt to the slopes of Sinai they had experienced nothing but Grace, in spite of their murmurings. Now God was going to teach them, and through them the whole human race, that man at his best cannot *earn* His favour. Accordingly He proposed to them special blessings if they would obey His commandments (Exod. 19. 5, 6), and at once they promised, without even waiting to know what the commandments were. They believed themselves quite capable of obedience,

but in doing so they really rejected God's Grace, and in consequence He forbade all access into His presence on pain of instant death. "On the third day...there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." The effect on Israel was immediate. "All the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings,...and when the people saw it they removed and stood afar off" (chap. 20. 18). This was natural, for the Law, voicing as it does the holiness of God, can only create dread of, and distance from, Him.

But even then Israel did not realise their inability to keep the holy Law of God. Again they promised perfect obedience, but at once proved their inability to render it, by setting up the golden calf. But what had become of that covenant of Grace with the patriarchs engrossed in the blood of the sacrifices? It survived still, as the apostle Paul tells us: "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". "For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect....therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the

seed," but "the Law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3. 17, Rom. 4. 14-16, Gal. 3. 12).

IV. Why then was the Law Given?

The idea that it was to provide man a way to Heaven is very widespread and indeed natural, but quite mistaken. None ever went to Heaven by keeping the Law, for none ever did keep it. "By the deeds of the Law then shall no flesh be justified" (Rom. 3. 20). "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse" (Gal. 3. 10). It is clear that God never intended a system which justifies no one to be a way to Heaven, and it is equally clear that some other way must have been found, or else how could all the saints from Moses to Christ have been saved?

In Romans 3 the apostle Paul deals with the general inability of the Law to save any one, and then in the following chapter, with the cases of Abraham and David, two Old Testament saints, undoubtedly justified before God. These two men are taken as typical of saints living before the Law and under the Law.

How, then, was Abraham justified? By works? No, but by faith in God. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (verse 3). But Paul anticipates an objection: Was not Abraham circumcised? May this not have been in whole or in part

the ground of his justification? The answer is that he was justified by faith *before* he was circumcised (verse 10). The case of David is next dealt with. He was born under Law, but was he justified by Law? No, but by faith in God. When in Psalm 32 he describes the blessedness of the man “whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered”, he is describing the experience, evidently his own, of the man to whom the Lord reckons righteousness without works. David had learned his sinfulness, and had come to God by the sacrifices, from which he saw, no doubt in part, as Abraham did, the day of Christ, and was glad. Repentance and faith have been God’s way in every age, and every saint has trod that path.

1. The Law Reveals Sin. The Law was not given to save men but to show men their need of salvation, not to remove sin but to reveal it. “By the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3. 20). The word here means ‘accurate knowledge’. The Law can only condemn all who come short of its perfect standard, for “what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”, for where is the man who has always loved the Lord His God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself? No, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”, and

therefore all are condemned. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them'' (Gal. 3. 10). In setting up the golden calf Israel at once broke the second commandment in particular and the Law as a whole. ''For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all'' (James 2. 10).

2. The Law Aggravates Sin. The Law not only reveals sin, but increases its guilt. ''Wherefore then serveth the Law?'' is asked in the Epistle to the Galatians. ''It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made'' (chap. 3. 19); ''because of, or for the sake of, transgressions'', that is, to increase the number of transgressions. Law does not create sin, but aggravates its character. Sin is always sin, and must be punished, otherwise ''they who have sinned without Law'' could not (as they certainly will), ''perish without Law'', but sin against Law becomes 'transgression' and merits severe punishment. ''Until the Law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed* where there is no Law,''

*''Not imputed'' in the sense of not visited with summary punishment. In this sense the trespasses of the world are not imputed now in this day of grace (2 Cor. 5. 19), but will be later, unless repented of.

“for where no Law is, there is no transgression.” “Moreover, the Law entered, that the offence might abound” (Rom. 4. 15, 5. 13, 20). A father might frame a set of rules that would bring into greater relief the disobedience of his child. The rules might not reform him, but would certainly increase his responsibility. The lawbreaker incurs therefore greater guilt, becomes more responsible, and so “the Law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4. 15).

The Law is a mirror to show defilement, a standard to measure shortcomings, but a mirror cannot cleanse nor a standard add one hair's-breadth to the stature of a man.

3. The Law Energises Sin. That is, increases its activities. It is true that “the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good”; but so evil is man by nature, that the very fact that the Law forbids a thing makes him long for it. “Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead” (Rom. 7. 7, 8).

The Law does not beget sin, but revives its dormant activities. “When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.. That sin by the commandment might become

exceeding sinful'' (vv. 9, 13). How important, then, it is that the Christian should not put himself under Law! Instead of strengthening himself and weakening sin's hold, he weakens himself and strengthens sin, for "the strength of sin is the Law" (1 Cor. 15. 56). It is occupation with Christ,* not with "the Law of commandments", which frees men from the feverish activities of sin.

4. The Law Schools the Sinner. Paul writes to the Galatians of himself and his fellow-members of the house of Israel, "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." The words "to bring us" are in italics, and the sense seems rather to be "the Law was our schoolmaster up to Christ," that is, it was "making ready a people" to receive Him. Its daily lesson to man was his utter helplessness to keep it. If we remain under Law, instead of coming to Christ, He "becomes of no effect", for "if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 3. 24, 5. 4, 2. 21).

The Lawful Use of the Law.

The Law, however, has a most important use. "We know," writes the apostle, "that

*The apostle closes the third chapter of the Romans with the question, "Do we then make void the Law through faith? Nay, we establish the Law". This does not mean establish it as a rule of life for the future guidance of the Christian, but vindicate its claims for the past transgression of the sinner.

the Law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners'' (1 Tim. 1. 9). There is, then, an illegitimate use of the Law, and there is a legitimate use. The former is to use it as a means of justifying the ungodly or of sanctifying the believer; the latter to use it as a means of convicting of sin and judgment to come. The place for exhibiting the Ten Commandments is not inside a "place of worship", but outside on the street, to warn the careless passer-by of sin and of judgment to come. The Law may well be used to persuade sinners of their need of a Saviour, "but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3. 25). The schoolmaster referred to is the Law (v. 24). What is the Christian's relation to the Law? He is not under it, for he has died to it. The Law has slain him. Henceforth if he lives at all it cannot be on the old plane of the Law which slew him, but on the new plane of resurrection with Christ. And this is the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul when he says, "I through the Law died unto the Law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God,

who loved me, and gave Himself up for me'' (Gal. 2. 19, 20, R.V.). How different all this is to the legal principle of commandments and ordinances!

In Romans 7 the apostle explains this change of relationship in another way. He likens the Law to a husband who dies leaving his widow free to marry again. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made *dead to the Law* through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God..Now we have *been discharged from the Law*, having died to that wherein we were holden'' (Rom. 7. 4, 6, R.V.). In the above passage it is abundantly clear that it is not justification which is in view, but fruit-bearing. Would it please a husband who had married a widow to find her regulating her conduct by the rules laid down by her former husband? The principle of life for the Christian is not keeping the commandments of the Law, but union with Christ. The same truth is taught in Romans 6 where the promise is: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace''. The subject of the chapter is not justification, but practical deliverance from the power of sin. When the believer fails, as, alas, he is too prone to do, he loses the sense of Grace, and his tendency is to put

himself under Law in one shape or another, but this leads to discouragement, if not to despair. But God is still the God of Grace, and "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", so that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 2. 1, 1. 9).

PART II.—GRACE.

"Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ." This brings us to the second part of our subject—THE GRACE OF GOD. Had the Law of Sinai been God's last word to man, our state had indeed been hopeless. But God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1. 2). The Law proved man's helplessness, but prepared him for that Grace which 'overflows our deepest need' as manifested in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without that Cross all must be eternally lost, by that Cross all may be eternally saved. When 'the Son of Man ascended up where He was before', bearing in His body the marks of His rejection, there was only one thing man had a right to expect; immediate judgment. Instead of that the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost to initiate a testimony, first to the murderers of Christ, and then to the whole world beyond, of reconciliation to God through His death

and resurrection. This is the testimony of the Grace of God. Let us ask then :

- I. What is the character of Grace ?
- II. Who are the objects of Grace ?
- III. What can Grace do for us ?
- IV. What does Grace expect from us ?

I. The Character of Grace.

How are we to understand "Grace"? The word like "Law" is used in various senses. Sometimes the Greek word (*charis*) is translated 'thanks', "Thanks be unto God" (2 Cor. 2. 14, 8. 16). To "say grace" is to "give thanks". In other places it stands for Divine help and strength communicated to the believer, as "He giveth Grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5. 5); "My Grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12. 9), or for the fruit of that help manifested in the life of the believer. "See that ye abound in this Grace also" (2 Cor. 8. 7; see also 1 Tim. 1. 14). But none of these is the primary meaning of the word in the Scriptures. It usually stands for the principle on which God is dealing at the present time with man, His free and undeserved favour through Christ to the undeserving and sinful. Grace offers a perfect pardon to him who is "guilty of all", an unfading inheritance to him who has "spent all", the best thing in Heaven to him who has forfeited all; yea, the "Crucified" as a Saviour to His crucifiers.

Manifestations of Grace.

The Scriptures abound in illustrations of the Grace of God to the unworthy.

The Story of Mephibosheth is a beautiful instance. We see him who was once a fugitive from David, far away in a land of want and an enemy at heart, sought out, reconciled, enriched with favours, and seated at the royal table continually "as one of the king's sons" (2 Sam. 9). All this was to show to Mephibosheth, as David expressed it, "the kindness of God", a kindness he had so often himself experienced.

We see the same grace in the reception of **the Prodigal** (Luke 15). "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." If the story went no further it would have been a fine example of what Grace can do, but there was much more to follow. The prodigal's need might have been met with bread and a place in the kitchen, but the father's heart could not be content with that. He must give him the best robe, the best place, the best food, and the best company (Luke 15. 20-24). Here we have a bright picture of the Grace of God to the repentant sinner. Forgiveness and a promise of Heaven might satisfy the latter, but nothing short of the bestowal of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places in Christ'' could satisfy the heart of God.

But it is only in **the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ** that we can behold the full expression of the Grace of God. ''For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich'' (2 Cor. 8. 9). Grace marked all His ways, and preeminently so at the Cross. There we see Him praying for His enemies, snatching the dying robber as a brand from the burning, and giving Himself, the Righteous One for the guilty ones, the Holy One for the sin-stained, the Prince of Life for those who were ''dead in trespasses and sins''.

Grace and Law Contrasted.

The contrast between Law and Grace is explained in Romans 4. 4: ''To him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of Grace, but of debt. But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness''. And the fact that we are saved by Grace, not by Law, is clearly enforced in 2 Timothy 1. 9: ''Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began'', and once more in Titus 3.

5-7: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy* He saved us;..that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life".

If any are to be justified by Law they must keep the whole Law perfectly, so "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight", for none have kept it, nor can any keep it. But all who *believe* "are justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". "Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ." Not Grace at the expense of Truth, but "Grace and Truth", that is, Grace founded on righteousness. God would not have been true to His own Holy Nature had He condoned sin in order to show Grace to the sinner. The common idea of Grace is that God will be too merciful to punish the sinner, but this would not be Grace but weakness. What would be said of a judge who let off a law-breaker because he was too kind to inflict the penalty? It is at the Cross of Calvary that "Mercy and Truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. 85. 10). Truth demanded the sinner's death, mercy pleaded for the

*The difference between the closely allied attributes of Mercy and Grace seems to be that while the former goes out to the suffering and lost, the latter is the spontaneous favour of God to the guilty. We need Mercy in our misery and helplessness, Grace in our sin and wickedness.

sinner's pardon. How could such conflicting claims be met? It was not enough for Christ to come and keep the Law perfectly. This He did as an obedient Jew to the glory of God and the exaltation of the Law, but it was not thus that the curse of the Law could be removed. The perfect obedience of Christ only served to prove His own holiness and to throw into greater relief the disobedience of man. His personal righteousness could save no one. It was only by "His death on the Cross" that He could meet our need as sinners. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *being made a curse for us*: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3. 13). Who can measure the infinite Grace that prompted such a sacrifice, fathom the depths of suffering involved, or fully gauge the greatness of the deliverance effected by it?

II. The Objects of Grace.

To whom does the Grace of God offer itself? To the righteous, the worthy, the religious? Nay, but to the unrighteous, the unworthy, the godless. Listen to the words of God: "Let the *wicked* forsake his way, and the *unrighteous* man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55. 7). "When we were yet without strength, in due time

Christ died for the *ungodly*.” “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us.”

“When we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5. 6-10). “Wicked”, “unrighteous”, “ungodly”, “sinners”, “enemies”, such is the description of those to whom the Grace of God is offered, and who are blessed if they come to Him in the spirit of the well-known words:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for Grace.

Grace can now flow out unhindered to men, and can accomplish that which was impossible to the Law.

This brings us to our third point:

III. The Capabilities of Grace.

1. Grace can condemn sin without condemning the sinner. The Law cannot spare the sinner. “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 (or by a sacrifice for sin, margin), condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8. 3). “The Law is holy,” but even so it could effect nothing for man, owing to the weakness of his flesh, in which “there is no good thing”. As has been well said, ‘the Law was as a lever of steel on a fulcrum of sand’—powerless to work.

Man in the flesh is fully judged. By the rejection and crucifixion of Christ he has proved himself utterly and incurably bad. God can by no means clear the guilty; but the very death of Christ that reveals his guilt is presented to him as the only remedy. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses'" (Acts 13. 38).

The Law can only condemn the sinner; Grace can make the sinner the 'Righteousness of God'* in Christ, for the believer is not only justified, but is united with Him who is the 'Righteousness of God'.

2. Grace can deal effectively with all sin. Under the Law there was no provision for any but sins of ignorance. All flagrant sin was to be punished with death (see Lev. 24. 10-14, Num. 15. 30, Deut. 17. 2-7, 19. 11-12). Under Grace all sin can be

*The expression 'Righteousness of God' is used in at least two distinct shades of meaning. It often means the principle of God's dealings with His creatures; His consistency with Himself. But all God's ways are the outcome of His essential character. His actions reflect His being. Hence the 'Righteousness of God' is used in the secondary sense of what the believer receives from Him (Rom. 3. 22). There is no Scriptural authority for saying that the 'Righteousness of Christ', in the sense of His righteous life on earth, is imputed to the believer. The word in Romans 5. 18 should be, not 'the righteousness of One', but 'one act of righteousness', *i.e.*, His death on the Cross (see R.V.).

forgiven, even blasphemy against the Son of Man (Matt. 12. 24-32).^{*} Peter offered forgiveness to those who by wicked hands had crucified and slain Him, and all who turned to God were cleansed from their terrible sin. The testimony of Paul was the same: "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5. 20).

3. Grace can justify the sinner. This the Law could not do, for "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight". No, not even an apostle, as Paul reminded Peter at Antioch, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law" (Gal. 2. 16); and as Peter himself affirmed at Jerusalem, "We believe that through the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15. 11). If this was true for the apostles, how much more for men of lesser mould like ourselves?

The terms of this justification are free. "Being justified freely by His grace." The ground is the Blood of Christ; "Justified by His Blood" (Rom. 5. 9). Its proof is the resurrection of Christ, "Who was..raised

^{*}All sin, except of course the sin against the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 12. 24-32), which is the deliberate and final rejection of the testimony of the Spirit, since Pentecost, to a glorified Christ.

again for (*dia* with an accusative case, which is always in the New Testament equal to 'because of') our justification'' (Rom. 4. 25). Faith is the hand that receives it, "Being justified by faith" (Rom. 5. 1), and good works the fruit of it (see James 2. 14-26). But what is its source? The Grace of God.

For centuries the sources of the Nile remained an unsolved mystery. Whence came that ceaseless flow of living waters through leagues of sun-baked desert? The discovery of the great lake system of East Central Africa, fed by the glaciers of the Rowensori Mountain Range, at last explained the mystery. And if it be asked whence come those fruitful streams of Eternal blessing, bringing pardon, life, and peace by way of Calvary to countless millions, the answer is: We are "justified freely by His *Grace* through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus''.

4. Grace saves the sinner. This again the Law could not do. The Grace of God in Old Testament times reached many who were born under the Law, yet this was not by their works, but through faith in God. Wherever a soul is brought by the Spirit to acknowledge its sins and believe God, the benefits of the work of Christ are reckoned to that soul. Christ has always been the only way, His death the only ground. Before Christ, all who believed were saved on the ground

of His atoning work, not yet historically fulfilled, but regarded as accomplished in the purposes of God by "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13. 8).

Now "the Grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2. 11, R.V.). "To all men," that is, to Jew and Gentile alike, to religious and irreligious, to bond and free. Grace knows no limit of clime or race, demands no supplementary ordinances, acknowledges no preferential circles. Wherever a needy soul puts out an empty hand, Grace fills it. "By Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2. 8).

5. Grace brings the sinner near to God. The Law repels, as we read in Exodus 20. 8, when the people heard the Law, "they removed and stood afar off". But five chapters later we see Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel going up into the Mount with confidence. What accounted for this? The blood of the sacrifices (shadows of the Sacrifice of Calvary) had been sprinkled on Israel, "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people". They were thus made ceremonially nigh to God; but to-day not only believing Israel, but Gentiles who once were "far off are made nigh by the Blood of Christ" (Eph. 2. 13), that same Blood by

which "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace" (chap. 1. 7).

6. Grace confers life. The Law could only slay. The very giving of the Law is termed in 2 Corinthians 3. 7, "the ministration of death", and of the Law itself we read, "the letter killeth".* Like the ancient code of Draco, the Law of Sinai knew but one penalty for direct infringement, death. "If there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law" (Gal. 3. 21), but on the contrary "the Law worketh wrath", and demands the death penalty on those who were already morally "dead in trespasses and sins". "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2. 4, 5). Grace not only brings the believer to God and "makes him accepted in the Beloved", but bestows on him a life capable of enjoying His holy presence.

But Grace does not only confer privilege,

*These words are often quoted as a justification for evading the literal teaching of Scripture and substituting a loose and unnatural interpretation on the plea of having discovered some hidden and more spiritual meaning. But "the letter", in the phrase quoted above, surely means, "the law written and engraven in stones". To admit the principle that the Scriptures do not mean what they say opens the door to any fanciful and arbitrary interpretation.

it imposes corresponding responsibility, and this brings us to our last point.

IV. The Responsibilities of Grace.

1. **Grace teaches how to live.** The Law demanded obedience but did not help man to obey. Grace not only saves but teaches how to live (see Titus 2. 12). The early Christians, notably the churches of Galatia, were influenced by Judaizing teachers to put themselves under Law, to accept circumcision, to observe 'days and months and years', and thus go back to the beggarly elements of worldly religion. This has always been a dangerous snare to Christians. The natural heart loves legal ceremonies and observances, and many religious people are glorying to-day in the very things which Paul condemned in the Galatians. The exact form of error may not be the same, may be indeed much more subtle, disguised under Christian terms, but the principles are unchanged, and are foreign to the Gospel. He who puts himself under part of the Law "is debtor to keep the whole Law", "has fallen from Grace", and really excludes himself from Christ. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from Grace" (Gal. 5. 1-4). When Paul rebuked Peter at Antioch for this Judaizing spirit, he affirmed that he "through the Law" had "died unto

the Law'', that he ''might live unto God''. (Gal. 2. 19, R.V.). If he had died to the Law, how could he be still under it as his rule of life? Of course the moral principles underlying the Ten Commandments are universal and perpetual. It could never be right to murder or steal in any dispensation, and every one of the Ten except the Law of the Sabbath* is reaffirmed in the Epistles.

When we say that the Christian is not under Law we do not mean that he may yield to temptation and ''take God's name in vain'', or ''bear false witness against his neighbour''. That would be to ''turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness''. Grace is not license to sin. We mean that the Christian does not refrain from these sins merely because the third and ninth commandments forbid 'swearing' and 'calumny'. Christian conduct is regulated by a higher Law, ''the Law of Christ''. Paul is careful to explain this when speaking of his ministry to the Gentiles. ''To them that are without the Law,'' he writes, ''as without Law, being not without Law to God, but under Law to Christ'' (1 Cor. 9. 21). The Law of

*The only place in which the Sabbath is mentioned in the Epistles is in a list of ceremonial observances, under which the Christian is warned *not* to allow himself to be in bondage. The Lord's Day is quite distinct in character and obligation (Col. 2. 16, 17). Those who seek to impose the Sabbath upon Christians are occupied with shadows, and would undermine the whole fabric of Christianity.

Sinai says, "Thou shalt not kill". The Law of Christ says, "Love your enemies". The former prohibits stealing, the latter enjoins on a converted thief not only to refrain from stealing, but to 'labour that he may have to give to him that needeth'. The Law of Sinai, speaking generally, is negative, "Thou shalt not". The Law of Christ is positive, "Do all to the glory of God"; "seek those things that are above".

Thus the Christian, though not legal, is not lawless. He recognises the authority of Christ and His claims over him. It is by Grace that the heart is established in this relationship to Christ, and it is only in communion with God that we can know the true Grace of God wherein we stand.

It is, then, by Grace that we learn to live 'soberly' in the secret chambers of the heart, 'righteously' in the glare of public life, and 'godly' in our heavenly relationships. Not only so, but

2. Grace equips for service. Though saved apart from our works "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2. 10). In view of this all believers are exhorted to 'present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is their reasonable service'. Paul warned the Corinthians not "to receive the Grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6. 1). He himself was a striking example of this, and could write,

“His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15. 10). The character of the service depends on the special Grace given, as witness the words of the apostle, “Having then gifts differing according to the Grace that is given” (Rom. 12. 6). Whatever the service may be, whether of suffering, testimony, or of doing good, His Grace is sufficient. Grace can even enable poverty to abound in liberality, as in the case of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. 8. 1); in fact, however varied the needs, “God is able to make all Grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Cor. 9. 8).

There is one more thing that Grace can do that nothing else can effect,

3. Grace sets before us a Hope. This distinguishes a Christian man from a man of this world, he has a sure hope. This hope is not the conversion of the world, nor even the setting up of the Millennium Kingdom. The former will never be realised, the latter cannot yet take place. The hope of the believer is not merely to go to Heaven when he dies, but to go to Heaven without dying, at the coming of the Lord. The Thessalonians had been taught to wait for God’s Son

from Heaven, for He is the Hope of His people. And it is not works, nor merits, nor special faithfulness that give the believer a right to this hope. It is the fruit of Grace, for it is Grace that teaches us to be “looking for that blessed hope”, and to “hope to the end for the Grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1. 13). Never before, as then, will Grace be understood, when all the saints, worthless in their own eyes, will be transformed in a moment into the image of their Lord and caught up to meet Him in the air, there to await the day of His manifestation, when they also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3. 4).

Now “the God of all Grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5. 10, 11).