

Lesson 6 God's Law and God's Grace

James 2:10-11 "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. V11 For he who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'you shall not murder'. If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law breaker."

Galatians 3:10-11 "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything that is written in the Book of the Law'. V11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because, 'the righteous will live by faith.'"

The Judaizers (early Jewish Christians) found themselves in an awful spot; they *could not* live up to God's law, yet they *would not* submit to His grace. The Judaizers belief was a mixture of grace through Christ and works through keeping the law.

Mosaic Law: The Mosaic Law refers to the laws and commandments given to the Israelite people through Moses following their exodus from Egypt. It includes the Ten Commandments which provides the *moral law*, outlining principles of right and wrong in relation to God and others. It also includes *social law* to govern Israel's secular, social, political, and economic life. Additionally including *ceremonial law* focusing on religious practices, roles of priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the structure of the tabernacle (and later the temple).

Psalms 14:3 "All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." God has promised to be a refuge for the righteous. A secure place for the godly.

Romans 3:10-13 "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; v11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. V12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' V13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."

The Holy Spirit stirs those to seek, those He saves. A non-Christian is not necessarily a seeker. When people turned away to go their own way instead of repenting, they went further astray in the process. No human being is capable of doing what is right on their own, apart from God.

Habakkuk 2:4 " See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright --- but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness."

This verse contrasts the arrogant (proud) with their all-consuming desires, with the righteous—those people of God who continue to trust in God and not themselves despite their troubling circumstances.

Q: What would you say to a friend who told you, "good people go to heaven"? _____

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1) If you break even one law, you're guilty of the whole thing. James 2:10-11, Galatians 3:10-11

Q: According to these verses, who is cursed based on keeping the law?

Q: Why is it that no one can be justified by the law?

_____ Why is that important? No one can be saved by the law because they cannot _____ it. James was writing to a Jewish audience. People who had been taught the law and lived by the law their whole lives, before hearing about Jesus.

Some early Jewish Christians (Judaizers) believed that Gentile believers had to be circumcised to be saved. Convert to Judaism, following the Mosaic Law, then they could come to Christ. It was a mixture of grace through Christ and works through keeping the _____.

The Pharisees and devout Jews were absolute experts at keeping the _____. They kept track of everything they did all day long. If righteousness meant scoring as high as possible on the checklist of religious deeds, they would win! But, Jesus, James, and Paul, all told us that's not how righteousness works. *This is much like people today think about being a "good person."*

It's like a balance scale, if your good deeds outweigh your bad, you're a "good person" and you get to go to heaven! But Scripture tells us that's not how it works. The law gives us NO chance to prove our righteousness; it only proves our unrighteousness; exposes our _____. There is _____ who is righteous based on the law (**Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10-13**). Paul quotes Habakkuk when he was trying to turn God's people back to God's law, but God told Habakkuk, "the righteous shall live by his _____". (**Habakkuk 2:4**)

The righteous aren't proud of their scores even with an A+. They admit they can't stand before God on their own works. Their souls are right with God because they confess, repent (not regret), that they are not _____. Those who are proud of their righteousness have too high of a view of themselves and too low of a view of God.

If we live by scores, we measure our righteousness by the standards of other people, NOT GOD! *We are never to compare ourselves to others as to our "goodness" or righteousness!* *God's standard of righteousness is perfection.* That's why our righteousness can only come from Jesus, the only ONE who is perfect. The only way to get righteousness is to accept Christ's righteousness on our behalf, to trade our score for His. No matter whether our score is an F or a B+ or 99.9%, **we must trade it for Jesus' perfect score to stand justified before God.**

Q: If we accept that no one can perfectly follow the law, how does this understanding change our perspective on personal righteousness and the need for a savior? _____

Q: How can we resist the temptation to justify ourselves by works of the law before God?

Living Faith in the World: Book of James

Scriptures 2

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James 2: 12-13 "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, v13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

The law that gives freedom is not a series of separate formal or authoritative commands, or proclamations issued by God, but a unified whole that ultimately calls God's people to a life of love, service, and mercy.

Galatians 5:13-14 "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love. V14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

We should never use our freedom as a springboard to indulge the flesh and be lured into sin.

Living in the Way of Jesus: Practical advice for how to live in a way that is faithful to God.

- a) Not showing favoritism to the rich and powerful but valuing all people equally
- b) Controlling our tongues, being slow to anger, slow to speak, and quick to listen
- c) Caring for the poor and keeping ourselves unstained by the world
- d) Living in peace, with humility, wisdom, and good deeds
- e) Submitting yourself to the Lord and resisting the devil, trusting the Lord
- f) Praying in all circumstances, asking God for wisdom and giving Him praise in all circumstances

Matthew 18: 21-35 The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant v22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." V23 Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. V24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. v25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. V26 At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, and I will pay back everything.' v27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. V28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. V29 His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' V30 But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. V31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. V32 Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. V33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' V34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. V35 This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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2) We are judged by the "law" of liberty, not by our ability to keep the "Mosaic" law.

Q: What is the law of liberty? How does grace bring freedom?

The "law of liberty" is the gospel—that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, not by keeping the law. The law of liberty is a covenant. A new way of thinking about salvation. The true "law" of God does not keep score of how well we follow the rules. The true "law" of God is walking in the _____ from the curse of sin in our lives, (James 2:12-13) freeing us to choose living as Christ leads, serving one _____, and loving your _____ as yourself. (Galatians 5:13-14).

If we focus on changing our behavior we will constantly feel like we have to do better and work harder to keep up. We experience anxiety, worry, and stress from trying to do it perfectly all the time. But when *we trust in salvation by grace through faith*, we can walk in freedom knowing our salvation is secure, no matter what! We have already *been justified before God*, and cannot *lose our salvation*.

However, it isn't just about the _____ of knowing we are saved. It's freedom from slavery to sin, leaving us free to do what pleases God! In the law of liberty when we put our faith in Christ, God makes us a new creation! We experience a _____ change.

He puts His Spirit in us. He lives through us and grows His _____ in us, making us like Jesus!

This results in changed behavior. Why? Because as the heart changes, the _____ changes, because behavior is an overflow of *what is in the _____*!

The freedom we have in Christ isn't about freedom to do whatever we want, whatever our flesh desires! *It's freedom from slavery to our fleshly desires.* We are given the power to overcome those temptations. What does that look like? *See Living the Way of Jesus. Scripture 2*

This is a complete change of _____, _____, and desires. We are to _____ and _____ as those who are _____ under the law of liberty. *Those who belong to Jesus will live differently.*

Q: What areas have you experienced God changing your desires and your behaviors over time

3) Those who have been shown mercy will show mercy to others. Matthew 18:21-35

Those who keep score of who is doing a better job of keeping the law are constantly comparing themselves to _____. They either feel prideful about how well they're doing or self-critical about how they're not measuring up. They are tempted to point out others' faults to make themselves look _____. Those who recognize they have been shown mercy are grateful for receiving grace they didn't _____. They are humbled by it! *That results in wanting to pay that mercy forward to others. We didn't deserve His grace and can't earn it. His grace is amazing* For those who have been forgiven by God there is no longer comparison of better or worse with scores. We all win; not holding grudges, refusing to harbor unforgiveness, letting go of anger and hurt, healing from it and moving past it. **It's not just Godly but frees our heart and soul!**