CHAPTER III: THE LAW, GRACE, AND FAITH

In order to form a clear understanding of the salvation process it will be good to have a very brief look at the law. The Law plays a necessary part in bringing us to Christ. Grace, which is the very thing whereby we are saved, and faith by which we acquire God's grace. Without an understanding of these, there will always be people who misinterpret doctrine and then lead others to hell through their false teachings.

There are many damnable heresies which affect the church even now, which teach salvation by works, and a myriad of pseudo-Christian cults that, whether they realize it or not, teach men not to trust in Jesus for salvation but to trust instead in their own religious works. Most of these have only arisen in the past 75 years or so as a direct result of the church not paying as much attention to the basic doctrines as formerly. This chapter should also serve as a prelude to the doctrine of justification by faith.

THE LAW

The word law in the Bible does not primarily mean civil law or any human code of jurisprudence but of the divine law of God as recorded in the Old Testament. In fact, the term law is actually a synonym of the first five books of the Old Testament otherwise referred to as the Pentateuch. In the Bible people always, refer to the first five books as either the law, the books of Moses, or more often simply MosExodus. When Jesus told the story of the man in torment who begged Abraham to send someone to his relatives to warn them about that place Abraham reminded him that "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luke 17:29) They have Moses and the prophets, meaning that they have the scriptures, let them hear them. The law is a vast collection of histories, prophecies and the most minute and detailed rules and regulations and contain the basic core beliefs of God's revelation to man, such as sin, and the promise of the redeemer-messiah.

There are some who divide the different historical epochs found through the period of time in which the Bible was written into what they call dispensations, which is not exactly what the Bible means when it uses the word translated dispensations (oikonomia) but I am unwilling to quarrel about such a meaningless distinction provided it be conceded me that the word is never used in the Bible to mean a period of time marked by a covenant. I only bring it up to establish the transdispensational nature of salvation.
Romans 4 clearly and unambiguously teach that all are saved exactly as Abraham was saved. In fact being an heir to Abraham is a constant theme in Paul's writings and the entire teaching that the gentiles are now true descendants of Abraham through faith in Christ would be meaningless if we were saved any other way than by trusting God's promise the same way Abraham was saved.

In Genesis 3:15 the first messianic prophecy was given at the very moment God was pronouncing judgment against Adam's sin. This shows God's great love for fallen humanity in that he never left our race without provision for our sins. Immediately upon pronouncing judgment, he proclaims his mercy by giving man a promise to believe in and be counted righteous. In other words, he gave man a way to believe and be saved. As soon as man sinned, God pronounced two things: Judgment against sin and mercy to save man from God's judgment. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." Who does not know that the heel, being farthest removed from the heart, is the safest place one can be bitten by a poisonous snake? Moreover, in scripture the head is the most important part of the body, which if hurt can prove fatal to the whole body? To interpret the type for you, the serpent would deal a grievous wound to mankind but the seed of the woman (messiah) would deal a wound to the serpent which would prove fatal, and is referred to directly in Revelation when Satan is described once again as a serpent, and not only a serpent but as that old serpent (Revelation 20:2) reminding us that the devil of Genesis is the same devil who ends up in the lake of fire in Revelation 20:10.

FOUR PURPOSES OF THE LAW

It has often been observed by evangelists that without preaching the law, which convicts of sin, people cannot repent of their sins and receive the forgiveness of their sins. That's it in a nutshell. In other words, the law, in its broadest sense means to show men that they are sinners. Many people, especially today in this age of moral relativity and no objective values are quite surprised to know that they would be considered guilty sinners and enemies of God, and many would simply reject it if they were told.
The first purpose of the law is to awaken sinful humanity to the fact that they are condemned
and stand in need of a savior. It is to make sin known. Paul declares in Romans 7:7 that he had not known sin
but by the law. He did not know he was lusting until he saw that the law forbids
lusting, he did not know he was coveting his neighbor's property until
the law showed him that God forbids us to covet.

The law is also given to make sin increase. Not that we actually commit
more sins but that the more we know of the law the more we see our own sins
and imperfections. One of the things I found when I was trying to earn God's favor through works and trying not to sin was that the
harder I tried not to sin (tried to keep the law) the guiltier and more condemned I felt. That's why
Paul calls the law the ministration of death.

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones (the tablets upon which the
Ten Commandments were written) was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not
steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be
done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the
ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed
in glory."

Do you see the contrast he re between the Old Testament's law and the New Testament's
grace? The law is called the ministration of condemnation because it can only minister
condemnation (or conviction) to those who hear the law; and yet this is a very necessary office,
for unless a sinner is brought to the conviction that he is a sinner, he can never see his need of a
savior. However, when the law has accomplished this office it must stand aside and let grace take
it from there. The law is the ministration of condemnation, but Paul calls grace the ministration
of righteousness. In addition, not only Paul but also the apostle John bears witness of this as well
"For the law was given by Moses, but grace
and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

Another reason for the law is to show us
that God hates sin and has pronounced the
ultimate penalty against sinners. "For the
wrath of God is revealed from heaven against
all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,
who hold the truth in unrighteousness."To
reveal to men the wrath and judgment of God
is a merciful kindness to sinners.
For what if one is driving on a road and knows not that the bridge is out over which he must travel? If he goes on in his ignorance he will drive off the broken bridge and crash, possibly killing himself; but if one were to flag the driver down and warn him that if continues in the way he is going he will come to hurt then the one who warned him is doing the driver a favor even though the driver may get angry and curse both the bridge and the one who warned him of it for making him take a long inconvenient detour. Just so does the law warn a man to turn from his sin by an honest and well-meaning warning of the harsh consequences of it. This is all to bring the sinner to see that his sin will result in the direst consequences and so he would gladly keep the law of only he could do so.

Then, finding himself unable to satisfy the requirements of God's law and realizing he has offended against God's justice the sinner is ready to turn in desperation to someone, anyone who can help him.

Yet another purpose of the law is to conduct and direct the sinner to the only one who can help him and this is exactly what the apostle Paul means in Galatians 3:24 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to BRING US unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The law is the greatest soul-winner of them all for the law is the schoolmaster who leads us to Christ. It does this by, 1) revealing the futility of trying to be righteous by our own works and, 2) revealing the righteousness of God which is to be found in the mediator to whom the law has conducted us -- Jesus. Therefore, beginning with sin, the law ultimately leads us to Jesus.

Besides the four purposes of the law which ultimately lead us to the cross there is the overarching consideration that the law was never meant to save us for the simple reason that no one other than Jesus could live a sinless life, which is what we would have to do in order to be saved by keeping the law. Remember James 2:10.

"For whosever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

The carnal mind has the hardest time accepting that in the law God gave us something that he knew perfectly well we could never fulfill. It just seems impossible that God gave us a law that he never intended for us to keep. However, he did.

**GRACE**

Grace is often defined as the unmerited or undeserved favor of God. This adequately defines grace but I would also like to point out that there is no difference between the word grace (charity) as it is used in the Bible and the word mercy. Too often people speak of a state of grace in a way that shows they have little understanding of what the biblical word grace means. Grace means mercy; it is something we do not deserve and yet God gives it to us anyway-unmerited, undeserved favor. It also is a complete opposite of our own merit or works.
This is seen most clearly in places like Romans 4:4 "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In other words, grace is freely given to those in no way work for it or merit it. If you could earn it by your works or any good in you then it wouldn't have to be given to you by grace. It is either of grace (a free gift to those who don't deserve it) or it is of debt, which means that it is given in return for something, just like an employee's labor puts his employer in debt to him for the amount of labor. The employer doesn't just give his employee a paycheck by grace or as a free gift but as something that the employee has earned and is due. On the other hand, Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work." Those who teach that grace is God's part and faith is our part not only show a complete lack of understanding of what grace is, they also wickedly rob God of getting all the glory for man's salvation which is what the legalistic opponents of this doctrine cannot stand.

That's why the legalist works so hard to include some part, however small that your works play in salvation, so since works is excluded they make faith a work (as if it were of ourselves and not a gift of God) They must establish the efficacy of works, put works on an equal level, or give some credit for our salvation to works. But Paul teaches that it can't be both; either you are saved by grace or you are saved because God owes it to you and the only way that could happen would be if you could perfectly keep the law. James says "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL." (James 2:10) The Bible teaches that "By grace are ye saved..." by grace or mercy God saves us; we don't deserve it. Therefore, if God's grace is what we don't deserve then it goes to follow that what we do deserve is God's wrath. In the scriptures, grace is always set in contradistinction to God's wrath and judgment. By grace are ye saved; just naturally, we deserve to face the wrath of God for our sins but by a special divine intervention of God's mercy we are saved, it is purely an act of mercy, which we do not deserve. The next thing to observe about grace is that salvation is always and has always been by grace.

**GRACE CAN ONLY BE HAD BY FAITH**

Salvation can only be had by grace and grace can only be had by faith. In other words, God's grace is what we need to obtain in order to be saved from our sins and faith is the only way we can obtain that grace. This is illustrated in such clear light in Romans 5:1-2 that it's blinding: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We have access by faith into this grace. Not by prayer or fasting or baptism or church attendance or anything else but by faith. Here is an illustration of Romans 5:1-2.
FAITH

I find that this illustrates Paul's theology perfectly for it shows what the apostle so clearly taught; that salvation is by grace through faith. This is because "Without faith it is impossible to please him..." (Hebrews 11:6) However, why faith? Paul teaches in Romans 14:23 that "...whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Whatsoever is an all-embracing term and includes prayer, fasting, charity, church attendance and all good works that all men in all religions everywhere do. It is of these that Christ warns "...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15) and it is true that the things esteemed most holy in the sight of men are sinful in the sight of God.

For example, the monks, whose lives were supposed to be an example of holiness when in reality the vanity and presumption of doing religious works God never commanded, rendered them, in the whole an abomination of sin and spiritual pride. And of himself the apostle makes no boast of his own righteousness but says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing..." The apostle consistently taught the total depravity of the flesh; in the flesh is no good, therefore faith is not of the flesh, just as the Lord taught Peter in Matthew 16:17 when Peter confessed him as messiah, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father in heaven." Flesh did not discern and can never discern the truth of the gospel but it must be revealed unto men by a special act of God, a gift of God, not of works.

Augustine rightly says that God crowns us for the gifts he himself has given us. Again as Paul tells the Corinthians "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) In other words, the knowledge of God in Christ can only be discerned through the spirit, not man's sin defiled intellect.

Therefore, the faith taught by the apostles is not just agreement with a set of facts. For example, some teach that to be saved all one has to do is believe in Jesus, which is certainly true if by believing in Jesus you mean trusting him to take away your sins; but sometimes people teach that all you have to do is agree about a certain set of facts- Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to atone for our sins, was resurrected the third day and ascended to the Father where he ever lives to make intercession for us.

Do you believe that? If you said yes, you are born again. I wonder that anyone could not see the one flaw in this view- that many people believe these facts the same way a Moslem believes in the myth of the Koran, that is, simply because they grew up in a society or family where this was taught and handed down to them. Such a faith is not real faith at all but simply acceptance of
whatever particular religion into which you were born. Such a faith can never please God or make a person righteous in his sight.

In order to support this view of biblical salvation being mere agreement with the facts of the gospel they sometimes point to Romans 10:9-10 which tells us that if we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths we will be saved, which is most certainly true but I would add that there is a world of difference between believing something in your head and believing it in your heart. Surely no one would deny that there is such a thing as superficial belief, mere assent of the intellect?

Moreover, if you concede this point then you must allow that it might happen that a person could have only a superficial faith in Christ. Inherited belief, which results in mere cultural Christianity, rather than personal conversion.

Now that we have established what faith is not, let us look at what biblical faith is. "For 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." (Ephesians 2:8-9) The "that" referred to here is our faith; it is not of yourselves. In other words it is not of your sinful flesh but is a divine endowment, a gift of God. Jesus said in John 6:37 "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." If you came to Jesus it is only because God drew you to him like a magnet. How then can we boast of our coming to Christ? We came to Christ because God gave us to Christ. Look at the savior's words again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me DRAW HIM: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44) Indeed if our salvation were not a work of God from start to finish there could be no meaning at all in all the expressions throughout scripture which ascribe all glory to God and none to man. The law then plays an important part in the salvation process in that it is only through the law that we know we are sinners. Grace is extended from God to man in order that we may be saved and faith is given us to trust Jesus to take away our sins; as Augustine says, "What then do you have of yourself but your sins?