

“The most extreme good news!”

THE CLEAR MESSAGE OF GRACE

The Glorious Life in Christ Series
Part 2

RYAN RUFUS

THE CLEAR MESSAGE OF GRACE

7 Essential Teachings on Grace

by
Ryan Rufus



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by Ryan Rufus

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ISBN: 978-988-16029-6-1

Published in 2013 by New Nature Publications

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A special thanks to:

Jan Boshoff – Editing & Proofreading

Lisa Ackerman – Cover Design & Artwork

www.isibinidesign.com

Printed in Hong Kong

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1

TOTAL FORGIVENESS

The Gospel is the Good News that those who come into Christ receive total forgiveness of all their sins and that God will never count their sins against them ever again!

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

HEBREWS 10:12-14 (ESV)

Jesus offered one sacrifice for all sin for all of time. That includes every sin from the start of time to the end of time. Every past sin and every future sin was put onto Christ as he hung on the Cross. God then poured out the full weight of his wrath and punishment upon Christ for our sin. That is why it is very important to be in Christ, where all of our sins have been punished already. Once you come into Christ you receive full forgiveness of sins. Every sin you have ever committed and every sin you could

possibly commit in the future was dealt with in Christ!

Now, if all your sins were punished in Christ do you know what this means? It means that God will never punish you for those sins.

Where is the safest place to be in a bush fire? It's where the fire has already burned. Why? Because it can never burn there again. Where is the safest place for sinners to be? In Christ where the fire of God's wrath has already fully burned! Why? Because it can never burn there again. If you are in Christ then all of your sins have already been punished and dealt with! From the start of your life to the end of your life. God will never hold your sins against you because they were taken away in Christ and dealt with!

The Cross looked ahead at every sin that would ever be committed and it dealt with it right there. We live after the Cross. So, if the Cross didn't deal with future sins then everyone born after the Cross cannot be forgiven and are still in their sins. No, the Cross looked ahead and dealt with every possibly future sin. It's hard for people to accept, but the truth is, all your future sins have already been forgiven! Does that mean we should just run out and sin? Of course not! But the fact is, even if you did, those sins have already been forgiven! We must accept this truth first before we even look at overcoming sinfulness in our lives and walking in victory.

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,"

COLOSSIANS 2:13 (ESV)

The Gospel reveals that God forgave us all of our sins (trespasses).

Forgiveness is not future tense, it is past tense! God doesn't forgive us all our sins, he forgave us all our sins. It happened 2000 years ago and when we come into Christ we come into total forgiveness of sins. God doesn't progressively forgive us our sins, he did it at the Cross once and for all. But it's vital for us to be in Christ because that is how we receive or access this completed gift of total forgiveness of sins. Once we come into Christ by faith we receive total forgiveness of sins. It's a gift we receive not a reward we achieve!

Knowing that you are totally forgiven of all your sins and that God will never count them against you ever, will seriously affect how you live your life and the relationship you enjoy with God. It will free you from a whole lot of lifeless rituals that are based in trying to get rid of guilt and release you into a new and living way of serving God and being fruitful.

"...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

HEBREWS 9:14 (ESV)

FURTHER READING

It's vital that each person receives this gift of forgiveness through faith in Christ.

"He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,'⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached

*in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”*

LUKE 24:46-48 (NIV)

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

ACTS 2:38 (NIV)

“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

ACTS 10:43 (NIV)

“Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.”

ACTS 13:38-39 (NIV)

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”

ACTS 22:16 (NIV)

“to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

ACTS 26:18 (NIV)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace...”

EPHESIANS 1:7 (NIV)

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

1 JOHN 1:8-10 (NIV)

2

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Definition – Righteousness is to be perfect like God!

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:20 (ESV)

What kind of righteousness do we need to have in order to exceed that of the Pharisees? Especially since the Bible says in Romans 3:10 that there is no one righteous, not even one!

Do you think Jesus was saying you need to try really hard to be righteous and if you perform greater than the Pharisees then you will attain perfect righteousness and be able to go to heaven? Absolutely not! The Bible is very clear that no one is righteous of themselves.

So, what kind of righteousness was Jesus saying we need to possess in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Nothing less than the perfect righteousness of God! Anything less is an inferior righteousness that will keep us out of the Kingdom of God. God has made a way for all mankind to enter his Kingdom and walk in a relationship with him. It's called the gift of his righ-

teousness that makes us perfect in righteousness and enables us to draw near to God!

FOUR ASPECTS OF THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

1) Righteousness is a gift we receive not a reward we achieve.

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”

ROMANS 3:19-22 (ESV)

“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”

ROMANS 5:17 (ESV)

Righteousness is a gift we receive not a reward we achieve.

If it's a reward for good performance then our righteousness is always based on our performance. If it's a gift then our righteousness is never based on our performance, but always on the quality of God's righteousness – which is perfect. Therefore, our righteousness is always perfect! Anything other than perfect righteousness is really no righteousness at all!

2) There are only two kinds of righteousness.

“For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

ROMANS 10:3-4 (ESV)

“...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:9 (ESV)

There are only two kinds of righteousness. Only one of them is true righteousness. There is self righteousness, which is man's attempts to be righteous through works of the law, then there is God's perfect righteousness which is a gift we receive by faith. Our self righteousness is like filthy rags to God and can never make us truly righteous. Not even slightly. It's an absolute offense to the Cross to believe that we can earn God's righteousness. The only thing that can make us righteous is the gift of his righteousness and it is simply received through faith and never works.

3) We haven't become a form of righteousness, we've become the very righteousness of God!

“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

ROMANS 5:19 (ESV)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 (ESV)

We haven't become a form of righteousness, we've become the very righteousness of God. Do you know that you are not more righteous than God and God is not more righteous than you? How is it possible to say that God is not more righteous than you? Simple! Because you and God both have the same righteousness - his righteousness! By faith you receive the gift of God's righteousness.

4) Nothing can make you unrighteous!

“we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

HEBREWS 10:10 (NIV)

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

HEBREWS 10:14 (ESV)

If God has made you righteous then nothing can make you un-righteous. Not even if you mess up and make a mistake and do something stupid. There is nothing you can do to make yourself anymore righteous and there is nothing you can do to make yourself any less righteous! Our ongoing state of righteousness before God is never based on our performance. It's always based on his perfect righteousness. He has made us perfectly righteous with his righteousness for all of time and nothing can change that!

FURTHER READING

“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

GALATIANS 2:21 (ESV)

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...²⁶To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

ROMANS 3:22, 26 (KJV)

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and

with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

ROMANS 10:9-10 (KJV)

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

GALATIANS 3:22 (KJV)

*“And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.
²³Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead...”*

ROMANS 4:22-24 (KJV)

3

OPEN ACCESS TO GOD

WE WERE CREATED BY GOD
TO BE HIS CHILDREN AND
ENJOY UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP
AND INTIMACY WITH HIM

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

⁴Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

⁵God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

⁶So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.

⁷He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

⁸He has showered his kindness on us, along with all

wisdom and understanding.”

EPHESIANS 1:4-8 (NLT)

MANKIND LOST RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEAVENLY FATHER THROUGH FIRST ADAM, BUT IS RESTORED BACK TO FELLOWSHIP THROUGH LAST ADAM – JESUS CHRIST

“And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.”

ROMANS 5:16 (NLT)

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.”

ROMANS 3:23-24 (NLT)

Before the fall, Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening in fellowship. Then, when Adam sinned against God by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, it brought death to mankind’s relationship with God. Man was cut off from intimacy with God and unable to be in God’s presence because of sinfulness. No matter how hard man tries in himself he can never make himself worthy to be in God’s presence, or

restore himself back into right relationship with God. The role of the Law was to reveal to mankind how futile it is to try and relate to God through our own self-righteousness. It's only by receiving the gift of righteousness that we are restored back to that high place of close relationship with God. We can now enjoy intimate fellowship with him!

Now our relationship with God is not based on our imperfect performance or our self-righteousness, but on the perfect righteousness that we have in Christ.

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD AND OPEN ACCESS TO HIM

“Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ²Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.”

ROMANS 5:1-2 (NLT)

We have peace with God. There are no obstacles in the way to us drawing near to him.

“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”

HEBREWS 4:16 (NLT)

YOU COULDN'T BE ANY CLOSER TO GOD!

“For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.”

EPHESIANS 2:6 (NLT)

You are always close to God! You are united with Christ and sit with him in heavenly places and can enjoy unbroken access to perfect intimacy with him 24 hours a day.

SIN CANNOT BREAK YOUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD ANYMORE!

In the New Covenant, even if you mess up and sin, it doesn't cut you off from God or break your access to him in any way! In the Old Covenant it did. That's because the Old Covenant was a covenant cut between God and man. It was a covenant, where your relationship with God and the blessings or punishment you'd receive from him, were all based on your keeping of the law of God. If you kept the law you would be blessed and if you broke it you would be cursed. The problem is, because of man's fallen state, it is impossible for anyone to perfectly keep the high standards of God's law. Man is always going to fall short, and therefore, suffer the consequences. One of the consequences is broken fellowship with God. But the New Covenant is a covenant that God didn't make with man, but between the Father and the Son, Jesus. That's why it's not reliant on our performance but on Christ's perfect performance. God brought us into Christ and that's how we come into this New Covenant. This is a much

better arrangement!

The good news is that now God relates to you through Christ's perfect righteousness in you and not your performance, whether good or bad! Therefore, you can have perfect and unbroken fellowship with God 24/7.

The proof of this is that the Holy Spirit does not leave you when you sin. If your sin made you unholy, the Holy Spirit would have to leave until you were made holy again. Then you'd have to be re-baptized in the Holy Spirit. This would have to happen every time you sinned! No, Jesus said in John 14:16 that the Holy Spirit will never leave you. This demonstrates that we don't have to be fearful ever again of being separated from the love of God but can walk in boldness in our relationship with him no matter what!

“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father.’ ¹⁶For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. ¹⁷And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.”

ROMANS 8: 15–17 (NLT)

“What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³²Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything

else? ³³Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us... ³⁸And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ROMANS 8: 31-34,38,39 (NLT)

4

FREEDOM FROM THE LAW

DEFINITION OF THE LAW

When the Bible refers to us being free from the law, it is not talking about the law of the land or the judicial system of your government. That is horizontal law between citizen and citizen and is designed to protect people and provide equal opportunity for all. We are still under this law and must abide by the laws of our country.

The Bible is referring, rather, to the vertical law between man and God. This law represents the perfect high standard of God, where if mankind is to come up to God's perfect level of righteousness then they must keep this law perfectly. All mankind is born under this law and will be held accountable to God according to his law. All those who have not kept God's law perfectly 100% of the time will be found guilty before him.

All of mankind has an instinctive awareness of what is good and what is bad. This is because mankind has a consciousness of

the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 1-3). It's where our conscience originates from and it's the essence of the law that was given to Israel under the Old Covenant. It is God's standard of what is right and what is wrong. All of fallen mankind will be held accountable to God through the standard of God's perfect law.

"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God."

ROMANS 3:19 (ESV)

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

We have to understand that there is a specific purpose for the law. It is not for us to try and earn our righteousness through it, but to see how unrighteous we are before God when compared to it.

The law was not given to make mankind righteous or better, but to expose our fallen and sinful state. It was given so that we would see our need for a savior and receive Jesus Christ through faith.

"For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are."

ROMANS 3:20 (NLT)

"God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more,

God's wonderful grace became more abundant."

ROMANS 5:20 (NLT)

Once we see our sinful and lost state and receive Christ as savior, then the law has done its job. We then come out from law and there is no longer any place for it in our lives. We are no longer under the supervision of the law of God. We are now under a new supervision – faith!

"Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

GALATIANS 3:23-25(NIV)

WHAT IS THE LAW ABOUT?

Law is about trying to perform well in order to earn God's righteousness, love and blessings and avoid his judgment and punishment. This puts the focus on yourself and how good you can be. Now, it's not wrong to want to be good and do the right thing, but it is wrong to put your confidence or your faith in yourself, thinking that by your own performance you can be like God. This is called human effort, works, performance, self-righteousness and confidence in the flesh. It does not impress God and no matter how hard you try you will always fall short. As long as your confidence is in yourself, you are saying you have no need for God and his gift of righteousness. You're also saying that Jesus died for nothing!

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness

were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

GALATIANS 2:21 (ESV)

Living under the law was never God’s intention for your life. His intention was that through the law you would see how futile it is to try and have a relationship with him based on your law keeping performance. This was so that you would submit to the righteousness of God by having faith in Christ and then coming into the new grace-life! There is a new life of faith in Christ that is far better than the life of the works of the flesh.

“Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. ³For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:2–9 (NIV)

WHAT IS GRACE ABOUT?

Grace is about receiving God's nature, his Spirit and his empowerment to live the life he has called us to live. This is the life of faith, love, hope, truth and being led by the Spirit. It's impossible to live this life through the law. It can only be done through grace. Grace is what causes us to access God's ability and strength and reign in this life.

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

ROMANS 5:17 (NIV)

UNDERSTANDING THE TWO HUSBANDS

The law is figuratively portrayed, in Romans 7, as a bad husband that:

- We were bound to through a marriage covenant.
- That always pointed out our faults.
- That was always right.
- That never lifted a finger to help us.
- That we could not just simply divorce or leave.

This actually represents humankind who are born under the law and therefore are figuratively married to the law. This law points out people's faults, is never wrong and will not lift a finger to help, as it cannot make anyone righteous.

Grace represents a better husband. But to be married to the old husband (the law) and also married to grace would be spiritual adultery! Therefore, in order to be married to the new husband of grace you have to die to the old husband of the law. This happens as we come into Christ through faith.

Jesus is the new grace husband:

- He always points out our perfect righteousness in him.
- He is always right in this.
- He is the one who did everything to make us perfect.
- We are joined in an unbreakable covenant to him.

Because of Jesus, we are blessed and every possible judgment and punishment has been taken away from us. Christ performed perfectly on our behalf and fulfilled the law for us and then credited us with perfect obedience and righteousness. We are called to stay married to this new husband and never to return to the old husband of the law. To do so is like committing spiritual adultery!

“Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ²For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we

were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

ROMANS 7:1-6 (ESV)

MANY CHRISTIANS STILL BELIEVE WE ARE UNDER THE LAW!

You may have discovered this already, but many Christians still believe we are under the law and they freak out when you try to tell them that believers have been released from the law. They argue that though we aren't saved through the law, we are still under the law and have to keep God's commandments. But this is simply a lack of revelation about what Christ accomplished at the Cross. Many new believers don't know the scriptures that arm them with truth against such lies and therefore slip back into legalism. The Bible is so clear about our freedom from the law. The New Testament reveals this from so many angles. Here are some, of many, scriptures that will reinforce this awesome revelation and equip you to bring others out of law and into grace:

No longer under the tutorship of the Law:

“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after

faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

GALATIANS 3:23-25 (NKJV)

Cancelled O.C. (Old Covenant) Law and took it away:

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

COLOSSIANS 2:13-15 (NIV 1984)

The O.C. Law is set aside to make way for grace:

“The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.”

HEBREWS 7:18-19 (NIV)

The O.C. has no more place in us now that we’re in the grace:

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant,

which was established on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.”

HEBREWS 8:6-7 (NKJV)

O.C. Law abolished:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

EPHESIANS 2:13-16(ESV)

WE ARE TO MINISTER THE NEW COVENANT, NOT THE OLD!

We are not to minister anything from that Old Covenant. If we do, it will bring death. You minister the Old Covenant when you put Christians back under law in order to please God, to not sin, avoid God's punishment and disapproval and earn his blessings.

“...who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to

an end, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.”

2 CORINTHIANS 3:6-9 (ESV)

LAW PLAYS NO PART IN YOUR ONGOING CHRISTIAN WALK!

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ²Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?”

GALATIANS 3:1-5 (ESV)

This teaching always provokes some questions:

- Now I know the next obvious question is, “If we are no longer under the law, then what’s to stop us from running out and just sinning?”
- “Without the external restraint of the law, won’t Christians go into sin and passivity?”
- “If we’re not under law, then what is our moral guideline?”

This is what we’ll look at in the next chapter, “A New Nature”.

5

A NEW NATURE

If you take the law off Christians, then what is left to restrain them? Won't they just run off into sin and selfish living? The fact people even ask this question reveals they don't know about the new nature!

For the believer, there is now a new force inside of us that is far more effective than that old external law!

It is called the new creation nature!

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 (ESV)

Do you know that when you were born again a miracle took place inside of you? God recreated you anew! Your old self, that was dead to God and under the power of sin and death, died and passed away! God then recreated you as a new being in Christ. You have been supernaturally transformed in the inside.

Your spirit is now alive to God and has a new nature – God’s nature!

“...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

EPHESIANS 4:24 (ESV)

You have been created after the likeness of God!

The new nature is better than the law!

That old inferior way of trying to be restrained by the law has given way to the superior way of the new man! No longer do we need the law telling us what to do and not to do. Now we have the life force of Christ on the inside of us and He just wants to live through us!

“For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

GALATIANS 2: 19-20 (ESV)

SHADOW VS SUBSTANCE

The law was just a shadow of the true substance that was to be imparted to us through Christ (Colossians 2:17 and Hebrews 10:1). What the law was powerless to do, Christ has done for us (Romans 8:3&4). In other words, the law represented God’s nature but it could not impart God’s nature to us. The law was powerless to get rid of our old fallen nature and give us a perfect nature. But in Christ, our old self dies and passes away and we are raised into new life as a brand new person – full of God!

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily

form, ¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ,”

COLOSSIANS 2:9-10 (NIV 1984)

“But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:17 (ESV)

Inside your re-born spirit you have all the fullness of God’s love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control and so much more (Galatians 5:22-23). God is no longer trying to get you to live up to a certain set of rules. He is simply trying to get you to be yourself, your true self!

Your new nature does not want to sin. It wants to do everything that is in God’s nature. Sin is foreign to your new nature. Your new nature wants to live for God in total righteousness, love and obedience. It’s not even a sacrifice for your new nature, it is actually now your new natural tendencies and desires. Simply behave according to your new nature.

The Gospel is not a message of how Jesus came to make people behave better. It’s a message about how Jesus came to make dead people alive! He didn’t come to bring more law into our lives. He came to exchange our old fallen nature with his perfect nature! A nature empowered by God with all his desires, his passions and his holiness.

God’s nature in us is the reason we do things for him. It’s our new motivation. That’s why we love, give, and are passionate about the things He is passionate about. It’s why we can have true joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It’s the reason we don’t lie, cheat, steal, gossip, slander, lust, covet and so on.

Our new nature is our new inner moral guide. It's far greater than the law. Under the law if you could get away with something you'd do it. But when you have a new nature you don't want to do it, even if you could get away with it!

DOES THIS MEAN THERE IS NO MORE TEMPTATION?

Of course not! Temptation will be around till the day we go to be with the Lord. It will always be trying to get you to sin. It appeals to your body and to your mind, not your spirit. Your spirit is perfect and cannot sin, but your body and mind are still a part of the old creation and subject to the frailties of this fallen world. You mind and body will one day become part of the new creation. Yet, only when you go to be with the Lord, according to 1 Corinthians 13&15. This is why, for now, the Bible says in Romans 12:1-2 that we are to offer our body as a living sacrifice, and to renew our minds. Essentially, this means we need to learn how to surrender our body and mind to our new creation nature.

SO IF WE'RE NOT UNDER LAW, IS IT THEN OK TO JUST KEEP SINNING?

Now obviously it's not ok to just keep sinning. Firstly, sin is no longer your master. You are no longer a slave to sin. You have dominion. You just need to exercise it! Secondly, sin is distracting and destructive. I find though, that most Christians aren't asking the question, "How can I get away with sin?" They're asking the question, "How can I get sin away from me?" The truth

is your new nature is not ok with sin. It is against sin! It doesn't want to sin. It wants you to walk in victory. The answer is not more law, it's more grace!

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,”

TITUS 2:11-12 (NIV)

It's a relationship with God and a revelation of who you are in Christ, that will cause you to overcome sin and walk in victory!

So, the original question, “If you take the law off believers then what will serve as their moral guide?” finds its answer in the new nature!

Now, while the new nature is our moral guide, there are some other things that serve to guide us as Christians that are also valid and important.

Here are some of those guides:

Common sense and wisdom:

For instance, if you go to bed at 3AM every night and wake up at 6AM for work, eventually you are going to get extremely tired and exhausted. You won't be able to function properly. You'll begin to lose your motivation and focus. You'll lose your passion and drive. Everything will become too hard. Depression will set in. You can go to doctors and psychiatrists to try get answers as to why you've lost all motivation, drive and passion. Common sense simply says go to sleep earlier! Common sense generally gets better through experience!

Character and discipline:

This is where you've developed your inner life to respond to what is the right thing to do regardless of feelings. For instance, if you want to get fit you have to run, swim or cycle. Your body screams out to you, "What are you doing! Stop this at once! This hurts!" But in order to get fit you need to tell your body, "Shut up and keep going!" When sin is pressing in and your body is screaming out, "Yes, do this. It will feel good!" You need to have the discipline to tell your body, "Shut up! You will not do this. Now run!" That's why you got yourself fit, so you could run away from sin as far as you can get! Ha ha.

Your conscience:

Every human being is born with a conscience. It's that innate sense of knowing what is right and wrong. In fact, if you studied every culture in the world, even ones that are remote and completely isolated from the outside world, you will find there's a common moral code that is universal. Of course, there are variations from culture to culture, but the fundamentals are always there. Common sense says go with your conscience! Most times when you ignore your conscience you get yourself into trouble or do things you regret.

The law of the land:

Though we are released from vertical law between man and God, we are not released from the horizontal law of the land that is citizen to citizen. We don't keep this law to stay right with God, but we do keep this law to stay right with man. The law of the land is good because it protects its citizens and provides equal opportunity for all. The law of God and the law of

the land are two completely different things. We are released from the system of God's law as a means of righteousness and walking with God, but it would be insane for Christians to think we are free from the law of the land.

Spiritual parents, mentors and coaches:

These are people who help bring out the best in us. They challenge us and keep us on track when we're wavering or giving up. It may be a spiritual father or mother or brother or sister. It may be your pastor or a close friend. They're not there to point out your faults in a way that's discouraging but helpful. They're also there to believe in you and push you to be and do your best!

"For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church."

1 CORINTHIANS 4:15-17 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit:

The Bible says the Holy Spirit is the one who comes along side us to be our comforter, our helper and our counselor (John 14:16-17). He's our closest friend and our greatest coach. He moves us with an inward witness. He is also called the Spirit of Truth and he reveals to us what is true and what is a lie. He's always declaring over us our perfect righteousness in Christ and testifying that we are children of God and that the Father believes in us.

He warns us when we're heading down the wrong track and encourages us on the right track. He empowers us with supernatural advantages in life, gives us knowledge, insight, discernment, wisdom and courage. He's a gentleman and won't force himself on us, but the more we invite him into our life, the more he will guide and lead us into victory and the perfect will of God. (John 14-16; Acts)

The Word of God:

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17 (NIV)

CONCLUSION

Your best moral guide is your new nature. God's nature is now your nature. All you need to do to be like God is to be yourself – your true self!

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When

Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming (for those not in Christ). ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

COLOSSIANS 3:1-14 (ESV)

(BRACKETS MINE)

6

A NEW IDENTITY

An identity is what identifies someone. It is usually made up from their appearance, character, personality, qualifications, skills, achievements and experiences. When you think about different people you know, what stands out about them? Are they tall, are they good looking, are they funny, are they friendly, do they complain a lot, are they good at sports, have they had a hard life and so on. This is how you identify them or attach an identity to them. But it isn't always their true identity, it's just the way we perceive them. Sometimes people can seem great on the outside, but on the inside they are hiding all kinds of terrible secrets and darkness. Sometimes people can seem awful to us on the outside, when, in actual fact, on the inside they are really great people. So often there can be quite a difference between a person's true identity and the identity others give them.

When it comes to ourselves, what is most important is not what others perceive of us, but how we perceive ourselves. You

will generally act according to what you believe about yourself. If you believe you are unloved and pathetic, you won't try very hard in life. If you believe you are loved and are great, you will move towards greatness in life.

How do we perceive ourselves, and what is the right way to perceive ourselves? The truth is, there is only one right answer to that. To see ourselves the way God sees us! Our true identity is based on what God says and thinks is true about us and not what anyone else or anything says or thinks about us. Not even what we say or think about ourselves. God is the one who gives us a new identity in Christ and this is what we need to line up our heart beliefs and thinking with.

When we came into Christ, our old identity went and a new identity was given to us. A new creation identity! We cannot continue believing the same old things about ourselves because everything has changed! You have changed. God has changed you whether you feel it or not. Your identity used to be based on your morality, your actions and your sinful state. But you have passed from death to life, darkness to light, old creation to new creation, orphan to child of God and so on.

WHEN YOU SEE JESUS YOU SEE WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME!

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (KJV)

Why a mirror?

Because when we look into that awesome glorious image of Christ, it's like looking into a mirror, for it's then we see what we have become! Our identity is found purely in the image of Christ. It is not found in our performance or our morality. It is not found in our past experiences. It is not found in the bad things that have happened to us nor in the good things we have done. Those things have nothing to do with our identity! Our identity is found in the image of God. When we see him we are looking into a mirror to see our true selves.

You may look at yourself in the flesh and think of all your shortcomings and form your identity out of that, but when God looks at you he sees you in the spirit as a new creation. And when he sees you it's like he's looking at himself! He is righteous, he is loveable. You are righteous, you are loveable, worthy, beautiful, clean, acceptable, pleasing and perfect! All this is your true identity. That's why it says in Isaiah 60:1

"Arise, shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

It doesn't say, "Shrink back in shame and try to hide." That was the old fallen you that was under the law". The new you is perfect just like Christ and you need to see yourself like that. How? By fixing your eyes on Jesus!

The more people see how perfect they are on the inside the more they will become that on the outside.

The truth about you now is that you have a:

New heart – God's heart.

New passions – God’s passions.

New family – God’s family.

New vision and destiny – God’s vision and destiny for your life.

New ability – God’s ability

Your old identity was “Sinner”, your new identity is “Saint”!

Your old identity was in the flesh. A slave, wicked, self-focused, unworthy, sinful, lost, cut off from God and hell-bound.

Your new identity is in the Spirit. A child of God, righteous, Christ-focused, worthy, forgiven, found in Christ, beloved of God and citizen of Heaven!

These truths are all revealed in the New Testament. When you read them they produce faith in your heart to believe what God says about you. As you do this, the old ways of thinking will be challenged and put out. Once these truths are in your heart you will find yourself automatically moving towards and acting according to them. This will have an impact on your whole life. It will cause you to walk in the purposes of God and your destiny. It will cause you to be who God created you to be!

7

A NEW FAMILY

We were not created for isolation or independence. We were created to be a part of a family – God’s family. God is not some strange religious deity. He is a Father who wants relationship with his children. Inside the hearts of all humanity is a deep longing to be part of God’s family, even if people don’t realize it. God put that longing there when He created us. We want to belong. We want to have relationship. We want to be loved and to love. We want relationships of love that go deep. God, the heavenly Father, longs to bring all mankind into an intimate relationship with him and shower us with his love and goodness.

Humanity lost intimacy with God in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and mankind was cut off from God. Since then mankind have been like orphans on this earth searching for meaning, significance, value and ultimately what they lost in the Garden – relationship with God.

God’s cry over all mankind is that we would be reconciled back to him. That’s why he sent his only begotten son, Jesus, the Last Adam, to die for humanity’s sins, that we could receive for-

givenness and be reconciled back to the Father and back into that which our hearts long for – to be God’s children.

Many are scared to “come into the light” because they feel unworthy to come to God. They fear God wants to punish them and judge them. But the cry of the Father is, “My judgment and punishment was poured out upon my Son on the Cross. I am no longer counting your sins against you, now don’t fear me or run from me. The light is Christ and he’s not there to expose you but to show you the way home! Don’t stay as orphans. Come back to the Father’s house. You are welcome inside. Come and be adopted into the family of God and be reconciled to your eternal Father! I love you!”

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

JOHN 14:6 (ESV)

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰or if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

ROMANS 5:6–11 (ESV)

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19 (ESV)

Jesus came to reveal God the Father and a way back into right relationship with him.

ADOPTED INTO GOD’S FAMILY

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

EPHESIANS 1:3-6 (ESV)

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,”

EPHESIANS 2:18-20 (ESV)

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back

into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”

ROMANS 8:15-17A (ESV)

WE HAVE A FAMILY INHERITANCE

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

EPHESIANS 1:15-23 (ESV)

BE ESTABLISHED AND ROOTED IN THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 (ESV)

FURTHER READING

Luke 3:21

Ephesians 5:1–3

John 17:20–26

1 John 4

1 John 3:1–2

Colossians 1:3–14

Acts 2:37–47

Philippians 3:17–21

Acts 4:32–35

Colossians 1:15–20

“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.”

ACTS 20:32 (NLT)

