

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

How does righteousness, faith, the Law, and grace relate to one another? I dare say that all believers understand that obeying the Law of God is a state of righteousness because it is acting in perfect accord with it. Simply put, they are free from guilt or sin (“transgression of the Law”—1 John 3: 4).

However, “whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is **guilty of all.**” (Jas. 2: 10). Breaking any point of the Law of God is *sin* and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6: 23). That is the state in which everyone exists because “**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1: 8). Since “**all have sinned**” (Rom. 3: 23), “**There is none righteous, no, not one.**” (Rom. 3: 10). No one is righteous through Law-keeping so all are worthy of death.

Obviously, the solution to this problem was the sacrifice for sin by Jesus Christ who not only suffered the sins of mankind but also bore the sins of the world to His grave through the shedding of His blood. But how does one have that sacrifice applied to their sins? Repentance of sin and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ:

ACTS 2:38 Then Peter said to them, “**Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance comes from remorse that brings about a change of both mind AND heart. Why does a sinner repent and become baptized? Because they seek to be saved from the penalty of *death* and lay hold on the promise of eternal life¹:

ACTS 4:10, 12 Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, **that in the name of Jesus Christ** the Nazarean, Whom you crucified, *but* Whom God has raised from *the* dead, by Him this *man* stands before you whole. ... 12 **And there is no salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must be saved.**”

But repentance, and especially baptism, are meaningless without *faith*:

ROMANS 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes [has faith]**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “**The just shall live [have salvation] by faith.**”

The GOSPEL is a message of salvation through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ to life in an eternal Kingdom of peace and joy ruled by the God Most High²! What is

¹ 1 Tim. 6:12, 19.

² Refer to the Sabbath Thought “[2024-06-29 Preaching the Gospel.](#)”

faith in the gospel? Believing that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ brings remission or pardon of sins³:

1 JOHN 5:10 **He who believes [has faith] in the Son of God** has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed **the testimony that God has given of His Son [that He died for our sins]**.

ACTS 10:43 “To Him [*Jesus Christ*] all the prophets witness that, **through His name [Jesus Christ], whoever believes [has faith] in Him will receive remission of sins.**”

No one is righteous because all have sinned and sin brings the penalty of death. Only through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is there remission or pardon of sin to eternal life. How are someone’s sins remitted?

1 JOHN 1:9 **If we confess our sins [repent], He [God the Father] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

God the Father FORGIVES the sins of those who repent of sin and are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ⁴. Forgiveness, however, is MORE than simply remission or pardon of sins:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 For He [*God the Father*] made Him [*Jesus Christ*] who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Jesus Christ]**.

<p><u>Forgiveness</u> by God the Father is both a PARDON for sins <i>and</i> being imputed RIGHTEOUSNESS by Him!</p>

After forgiveness, how is someone imputed righteousness? Does repentance and baptism make any human forever perfect in keeping the Law of God? No! Again, 1 John 1:8 clearly says so. Instead, righteousness is a free gift of God the Father:

ROMANS 5:17 For if by the one man’s [*Adam’s*] offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Righteousness is *imputed* (esteemed, reckoned, or ascribed) by God the Father to those whom He FORGIVES:

ROMANS 4:5-8 But to him who does not work but believes on Him [*God the Father*] who justifies [*imputes righteousness to*] the ungodly, his **faith [in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ] is accounted for righteousness**,⁶ just as David also describes the **blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness** apart from works: ⁷ **“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;** ⁸ *Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”*

³ 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

⁴ Rom. 6:3-4.

Righteousness is a GIFT from God to those He *forgives*—those who repent, believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and are baptized into His death.

Now comes the difficult part for many—understanding grace. Everyone knows this statement from Paul:

ROMANS 6:14-15 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for **you are not under law but under grace.** 15 What then? Shall we sin because **we are not under law but under grace?** Certainly not!

Being “**under grace**” does NOT replace the Law. Paul CLEARLY stated that fact:

ROMANS 6:1-4 What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin [transgression of the LAW!] that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?** 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life.**

Repentance, baptism, and the forgiveness of God (remember, forgiveness is both a pardon for sin AND being imputed His righteousness) means that we are DEAD to sin! Anyone who was dead but is now alive is BY DEFINITION living a NEW life! Paul explains the new life is Jesus Christ living IN a person:

GALATIANS 2:19-20 “For **I [Paul] through the law died** to the law that I might live to God. 20 “**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,** who loved me and gave Himself for me.

That new life, as Paul said, is under GRACE, not under the Law! So, what does that mean? Does grace *replace* the Law? No! Does grace do away with the Law? Again, no! At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ made it very clear that He did NOT come to destroy the Law:

MATTHEW 5:17-18 “Do not think that I [*Jesus Christ*] came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. **I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [the Law].** 18 “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

To *fulfill* the Law means to complete or perfect it. This is explained in the rest of the chapter. Beginning in Matthew 5 verse 21, Jesus mentions several examples of fulfilling the Law. He begins with the simple examples of equating anger with murder and lust in the mind with adultery. He ends with the GREATEST standard for fulfilling the Law:

MATTHEW 5:43-45 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 “But **I [Jesus Christ] say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,** 45 “**that you may be sons [children] of your**

Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Jesus went from saying that anger is murder to something far greater—LOVE your enemy. Jesus 'fulfilled' the Law by explaining the PURPOSE for keeping the Law is to BECOME agape love! This is the foundation of the two Great Commandments:

MARK 12:29-31 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 'And you shall **love the LORD your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment. 31 "And the second, like *it, is* this: 'You shall **love your neighbor [everyone around us!]** as yourself.' **There is no other commandment greater than these.**"

Think of it this way. Someone strictly keeping the Law will NOT have any gods before the LORD God, practice idolatry, use God's name in vain, forget the Sabbath, dishonor parents, murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony, or covet. In simple terms, a Law-keeper follows the biblical 'Thou shalt NOT' rules. What is the purpose of rules? To prevent causing harm to others—but no further.

On the other hand, the Law is completely unnecessary for someone filled with agape love because they love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They love their neighbor AND enemies. Agape love is not only OBEDIENCE to the Law, but it is the FULFILLING of it. For example, anger that leads to murder is replaced by love and lust that lead to adultery is replaced by love. Agape love goes BEYOND strict obedience to the Law:

GALATIANS 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is [agape] love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. **Against such there is no law.**

Obedience to the letter of the Law is a minimum requirement. The Law is FULFILLED by going beyond the 'Thou shalt NOT' rules by becoming agape love!
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This is where the grace of God comes about. Paul compared Adam, who brought sin and death to the world with Jesus Christ, who brought eternal life. Read these verses after deleting the references to Adam's "offense:"

ROMANS 5:17-21 ... **those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) 18 ... through one Man's righteous act **the free gift [God's righteousness imputed] came to all men, resulting in justification of life.** 19 ... by one Man's obedience **many will be made righteous.** 20 ... where sin abounded, **grace abounded much more,** 21 ... so **grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Righteousness is a GIFT from God to whom He *forgives*. Likewise, grace is a GIFT from God to those He has *justified* (imputed righteousness). What is the purpose of grace? It comes back to sin: "**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,** and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). Even with the Holy Spirit, no one can avoid sinning—especially sins of ignorance. Since God esteems His children as righteous, how can they be righteous if they still sin? Again, Paul explains:

ROMANS 3:21-24 But now the righteousness of God apart [*separate*] from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God, through faith** in Jesus Christ, to all and **on all who believe [have faith]**. For there is no difference; 23 for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified freely by His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

There it is in all its beauty. Grace is the gift of God whereby He continues to justify and impute righteousness to His children when they sin. (NOTE: Agape love will always produce fruits of repentance for known sins. For all the rest, they are justified through God's grace.) Perhaps, the simplest description is found in Proverbs 10:12, which says, "**love covers all sins.**"⁵ How? Through God's GRACE!

The gift of righteousness is upon all who believe (have faith) in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. But all still sin. Therefore, those who are esteemed as righteous also receive the gift of grace, whereby God justifies (regards as innocent) the sinner who is "dead to sin" through baptism.

Sadly, many believers still live under the Law and *not* under grace. Who are they?

MATTHEW 7:16-20 "**You will know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "Therefore **by their fruits you will know them.**

Someone living under Law is fond of rules and usually has a lot of anger. They spend much of their time policing others in order to point out their faults. They are rarely happy or content. And living under Law instead of grace risks eternal life:

GALATIANS 5:4 **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified [Gk. dikaioo = be righteous] by law; you have fallen from grace.**

Those living under grace are becoming agape love in the likeness of God the Father. They have agape love toward God, all mankind, and even their enemies. The agape love in them is reflected in desires to do GOOD WORKS, not just avoid harm to others. Interestingly, the means and opportunities for doing good works is also grace from God:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you,** always having all sufficiency in all *things*, **may have an abundance for every good work.**

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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⁵ Also 1 Pet. 4:8.