

The Relationship of Grace to Law

Text: Romans 6:14-15

Introduction

1. Some have erroneously concluded from the statement in Romans 6:14-15 that we are “not under law but under grace” that law and grace are mutually exclusive—that if you have one you cannot have the other.
2. The fact that we are under grace does not mean that we are not subject to law and that it is not essential for us to keep divine law.
3. This lesson will explain the relationship between grace and law.

I. We Are Subject to Divine Law

- A. The teaching of Jesus is called “law.”
 1. 1 Corinthians 9:21. “Under law toward Christ.”
 2. Galatians 6:2. “And so fulfill the law of Christ.”
 3. James 1:25. “The perfect law of liberty.”
 4. 1 John 3:4. If there is no law, there is no sin.
 5. Isaiah 2:1-3. The teaching that was to go forth from Zion in the last days was called “law.”
- B. We are required to obey that law.
 1. 1 John 3:4. To fail to do so is sin.
 2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We are to be guided by Scripture.
 3. John 4:24. We are to worship in truth (Truth being the word of God [John 17:17]).
 4. 1 Peter 4:11. We are to “speak as the oracles of God.”
 5. Matthew 28:18-20. After baptism, we are to observe “all” commandments.
 6. 2 John 9. We must “abide in the doctrine of Christ.”
 - a. The context of 2 John indicates that John used the expression “doctrine of Christ” to mean the doctrine taught by Christ—His doctrine, His teaching.
 - b. It is Christ’s teaching, His commandments, “truth,” that is emphasized from the beginning of the letter (vv. 1-2, 4, 6).
 - c. It seems the point uppermost in John’s mind when he penned this epistle was “walking in truth,” walking “according to His (Christ’s - GT) commandments.”

7. John 8:31. We must continue in His word to be His disciples.
 8. Whenever God has spoken to man or given a law, He has expected strict obedience and the utmost respect for His word.
 - a. Deuteronomy 4:2. Israel was not to add to or take from the law.
 - b. Leviticus 10:1-2. Nadab and Abihu, priests under the Old Law, were stricken dead for not respecting the law.
 - c. Revelation 22:18-19. We are not to add to or take away from the word of God.
- C. Grace does not mean we are not subject to law, rather, it means that we have a way of forgiveness when we violate that law, if we meet the divine conditions.

II. Paul's Teaching in Romans

- A. It is obvious from the Scriptures previously cited that Paul, in Romans 6:14-15, does not mean that we are not subject to law nor obligated to strictly observe it.
- B. His teaching is that we are not under a system of *mere* law without grace as a means of justification.
 1. Depending on mere law as a means of justification would mean that we would have to keep that law perfectly.
 2. Such dependence on "perfect law-keeping" would nullify grace for our justification would be earned by our sinlessness.
 - a. The one who kept the law perfectly would need no grace.
 - b. The one who depended on "perfect law-keeping" for justification would be a legalist.
- C. An example of Paul's teaching in Romans 3-4.
 1. None are "justified" by the Law of Moses. (Romans 3:19-20)
 - a. In order to have been justified by that law, people would have had to keep it perfectly, never violating it because once a person violated it, he became guilty and was condemned by it. (Galatians 3:10-12)
 - b. Those under the law did not keep it perfectly—all violated it. (Romans 3:23)
 2. Since justification is not earned by "perfect law-keeping," there is no reason to boast. (Romans 3:27)
 3. Our justification is on the basis of faith rather than the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)
 - a. The "faith" in justification by faith, is an obedient faith. (Jas. 2:17-26).
 - b. The works of obedience, works of righteousness, which emanate from faith do not earn justification, rather, justification is given because of the faith which produces the works of obedience.

- c. Thus faith is “accounted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:5)
 - 1) One’s faith is credited to him.
 - 2) As a result he is righteous in God’s sight.
 - 3) This only occurs when one’s faith is made perfect by works. (James 2:26)
 - d. Because of his obedient faith he is graciously forgiven and cleansed of his sins and made righteous before God and as long as he maintains an obedient faith, he will continue to stand righteous before Him.
- D. Paul is contrasting justification by grace on the grounds of an obedient faith against justification by keeping law perfectly in which the reward is earned and there is no grace involved.
- 1. Although we are under law, we are not under law as a means of justification.
 - a. We do not depend on “perfect law-keeping” for justification.
 - b. Without God’s gracious forgiveness when we violate the law of Christ, we would all stand guilty and have no hope.
 - 2. We cannot receive that gracious forgiveness if we persist in violation of God’s law for forgiveness is conditioned on repentance.

Conclusion

- 1. Since we are under divine law, we must submit to the will of the Lord.
- 2. At the same time, we should be thankful that we do not have to depend on keeping that law perfectly in order to stand justified in the sight of God.
- 3. How thankful we should be:
 - a. That God has provided a means of forgiveness when we violate His law.
 - b. For God’s grace.