

LIFE GROUP LESSON

LAW & GRACE - Week of July 21

Introduction

Have you ever tried something and failed ... Something you really wanted to do, perhaps a project you wanted to complete or a skill you wanted to develop? But after doing your best and giving it your all, you simply were not able to do it? It can be disheartening.

Much like the frustration we feel when we discover our frailty and imperfections or the embarrassment we experience after overestimating what we *thought* we could do, the people of Israel were never able to perfectly keep the Law... though at times they sincerely tried. There were times when faithful prophets and honorable leaders and kings cared about keeping the Lord's commands and encouraged the people to put God first. However, at other times, there was corrupt leadership at the helm, such as Ahaz and Manasseh, that modeled a dangerous disregard for God's Law and set up idols *in* the Lord's Temple.

Background

From the time of the Exodus from Egypt when the Lord gave the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai (circa 1491 BC) to the time of Roman occupation in Palestine (the land of Israel) many years later, true hearts longed for the Messiah's coming – the birth of the LORD's Christ (circa 4 or 3 BC). Up to then, the Law served as a holy and loving standard. As the apostle Paul wrote: "Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed" (Galatians 3:23). In fact, Israel (descendants of Jacob) were privileged because they had been entrusted with God's Law. This is one reason Jesus was sent *first* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Isaiah 43:10-14, Matthew 10:6, 15:24, Romans 15:8).

"He has revealed his words to Jacob, his decrees and regulations to Israel. He has not done this for any other nation; they do not know his regulations.

Praise the LORD!"

(Psalm 147:19-20)

Scripture is clear: God is unchanging (immutable) and "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8 see also Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29, Psalm 102:25-27, Malachi 3:6). God's Word is eternal; it is not being *made up* as we go along or view the landscape of human history (Psalm 119:89-91, see also Isaiah 40:8). Many people accuse Jesus of doing away with the Law. But Je-

sus said: "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose" (Matthew 5:17). The Old Testament (first covenant) and God's Law still serve a purpose – the Law is foundational bedrock truth graciously revealed.

However, "No one does good, not a single one!" (Psalm 14:3b) and all fall "short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). From the fall of the first man and woman, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, humanity's very nature became depraved, in need of redemption. And apart from the Holy Spirit, no one seeks God. As stated in a recent book: "Israel's ongoing sin problem is not limited to behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, and desires but extends to their very nature" (Holiness by Ayars, Bounds, and Friedeman p.31). But the Good News: God's answer is found in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in and through Christ that the Law is accomplished and our relationship with God is restored.

Read Romans 3:1-20, 21-25a

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Our only hope is to simply surrender to grace. We are saved by God's grace when we believe and place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not...

2. What are you going to do about it?

Scripture says that "Today is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Throughout God's Word, we are strongly encouraged not to harden our hearts like the children of Israel did in the wilderness (see Hebrews 3:7-8). Isaiah said: "Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near (Isaiah 55:6). Pray this simple prayer:

Lord Jesus, Forgive my sin. Save my soul.

Wash me clean. Make me whole.

Lord, I love you and I trust you. Help me turn away from sin and look to you.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

3. How can we help you?

Tell someone you prayed to receive Christ! Jesus is the Word made flesh. Remember: when we fall short and miss the mark – and yes, we will not always get it right – we must refuse to wallow in pity and self-defeat. That's exactly what the enemy wants us to do, is to give up. Ask the Lord to help you. Spend time in prayer and study of Scripture. Attend worship regularly and avail yourself to serving others in Jesus' name. Be part of a Life Group where others can help pick you up and encourage you to press forward. Pastor Charles often says, though we are not sinless this side of heaven, the goal is to *sin less* every day. Jesus calls us to be perfect like our Father in Heaven, gracious and generous in all he does for *all* people (see Matthew 5:43-48).

Close in Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, thanksgiving, and worship. Thank the Lord for his commands and decrees. Read Psalm 103. Acknowledge that the Law comes from a place of love. Thank him for sending his Son, the Word made flesh, to pay a price we could never pay and accomplish what we cannot. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

July 21: 2 Chronicles 4:1-6:11, Romans 7:1-13, Psalm 17:1-15, Proverbs 19:22-23
July 22: 2 Chronicles 6:12-8:10, Romans 7:14-8:8, Psalm 18:1-15, Proverbs 19:24-25
July 23: 2 Chronicles 8:11-10:19, Romans 8:9-25, Psalm 18:16-36, Proverbs 19:26
July 24: 2 Chronicles 11:1-13:22, Romans 8:26-39, Psalm 18:37-50, Proverbs 19:27-29
July 25: 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14, Romans 9:1-24, Psalm 19:1-14, Proverbs 20:1
July 26: 2 Chronicles 17:1-18:34, Romans 9:25-10:13, Psalm 20:1-9, Proverbs 20:2-3
July 27: 2 Chronicles 19:1-20:37, Romans 10:14-11:12, Psalm 21:1-13, Proverbs 20:4-6

When in Romans LAW & GRACE

Text: Romans 3:1-20, 21-25a, Ephesians 2:1-9

PLAIN TRUTH

God's answer to a law _____ is
Jesus and a grace _____.

1. God's Law is rooted in _____ and has a
_____.

2. God's Grace is _____ in a _____.

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