

Grace and Law

MAINTAINING THE BALANCE OF FAITH THROUGH DYNAMIC TENSION

BY VICTORIA SARVADI, TH.D.

It is common for most Westerners to approach the Bible from their own personal perspective of culture and language. We often forget that the Bible was written by ancient Hebrew thinkers, not in English but rather in their tongues of Hebrew and Aramaic for the First Testament and Greek for the Second. Foreign concepts of Middle Eastern lifestyle, traditions, archaic language, and idioms of those time periods are not easily understood by modern readers today.

The common point of view that was passed down through the ages of the church came from Greco-Roman thinkers. Christians rarely realize that Yeshua and all of His disciples were speaking and thinking from a Jewish mindset called “block logic” which is quite unfamiliar to non-Hebrew speakers.

Greco-Roman thinking is based on linear or sequential thoughts. The Greeks taught us to move from point A to point B and come to a calculated conclusion. We have also learned from the Greeks that opposing positions of a matter cannot both be true.

However, block logic is different. Opposing ideas are actually considered in order to arrive at a conclusion. This kind of “dynamic

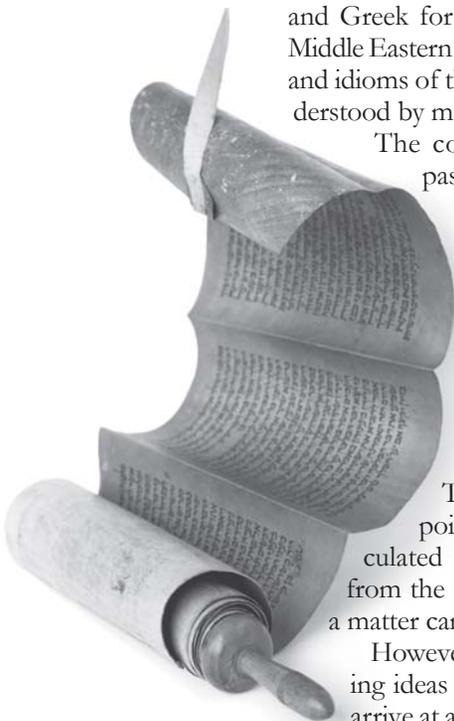
tension” seems to be contradictory to Westerners—which is why so many of them think the Bible contradicts itself.

On the contrary, the Bible only appears to hold a sense of conflict—but in reality, it is a perfect balance of God’s love, grace, and mercy and, at the same time, his righteous indignation toward the opposition of everything that God is. There are good and evil, light and darkness, God’s ways and man’s ways, right and wrong, heaven and hell.

Consider the irony; Yeshua is called The Prince of Peace, but he said, “Don’t think I’ve come to bring peace but rather the sword” (Matthew 10:34, CJB).

The first coming of Yeshua 2000 years ago caused many to receive him as Lord and others to reject him, which in itself is dynamic tension. The first coming of Messiah brought forgiveness and salvation to the hearts of mankind but eventually caused revolts against Rome as he prophesied that the temple would be destroyed. By the same token, his coming again will come on the heels of great tribulation but will culminate in perfect peace as government will rest on solely his shoulders. So . . . both are true. “The Savior” brought conflict, the sword and the splitting of a nation, but he is coming as the prophesied Messiah who will bring judgment to the rebellious nations and usher in world peace as he rules all nations in righteousness.

A good example of Jewish block logic is a fa-



miliar scene from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Tevye is considering the dilemma of his daughter Tzeitl and Motel the tailor. After learning that his daughter and Motel gave each other a pledge for marriage, he considers what he should do concerning this untraditional betrothal. Tevye expresses his inward thoughts out loud:

“He’s beginning to talk like a man. On the other hand, what kind of match would that be? With a poor tailor? On the other hand, he’s an honest hard worker. On the other hand, he has absolutely nothing. On the other hand, things could never get worse for him, they could only get better.”

This typical train of thought purposely considers both sides of a coin, explores the good and the bad, the pros and the cons. All the while both sides of the argument are true.

Many Christians seem to think that law and grace are antonyms, being polar opposites in meaning. This misunderstanding has caused many to stumble as they have taught they are “under grace” and somehow do not have to walk in the godly instructions that were given supernaturally to the newly formed nation on Mt. Sinai, named Israel.

It is true that the great task of man “abiding by God’s perfect Law” in his *own mortal power* was doomed from the start. But the Father made a promise—that is, in due time the Torah (or Law) would become flesh in the form of Messiah, and, by covenant, the penalty required by Torah would be paid for on behalf of man’s inability to faithfully comply with the written instructions from God. That payment would buy us grace.

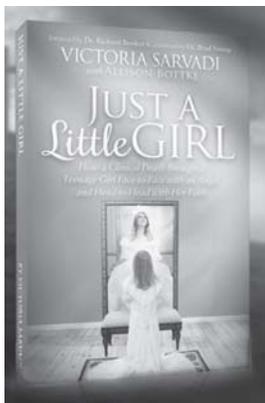
What then is grace? Grace is “the power of God manifest” in the born again, covenant believer. Grace integrates God’s **laws** into the hearts of his children of faith. This is called the *Law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus*—God’s Spirit writing his laws in us! Then, if this is true, grace is not in opposition to God’s law (instructions) but rather it is the means by which the law becomes a part of the new nature of man.

It’s not something which **you did** that you can be proud of. Instead, we are **God’s accomplishment**, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives (Ephesians 2:9-11, CEB).

Do not be deceived. Grace is not a free pass or a license to sin on the world’s wide road of life. It is the power (God’s accomplishment) to *convict* the born again believer to recognize his error in word or deed and then to return to the “narrow path of God’s ways.” This is an act of laying one’s self down daily and allowing the Spirit of Grace to guide you at all times.

So...

Is God a “God of Judgment and Vengeance?” Yes, and he has all power and authority to punish those who hate, oppose, and sin against him as sin



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separates us from him.

Is God a “God of Mercy and Grace?” Absolutely, and he has the power to pardon and forgive sin and empower those who deny themselves and choose to love him. Mercy is forgiveness, and grace is empowerment.

As Yeshua said “If you love me, obey my commandments”—which means that God says, “If one enters in covenant with me (love me), I will operate through him or her in my own power, walking out my ways as he or she yields their will to mine (obedience by the power of the Spirit). This is grace!

We are children of faith. We must trust in the unseen and believe the Good News that we have been redeemed by the power of the blood of Messiah and show forth that faith by good works that are called the fruit of the *Spirit*. This fruit is the evidence that God has transformed us. So faith and works are not oppositional either. No, the two concepts are a part of a perfectly balanced mindset that empowers dual actions of the physical man of “doing good” motivated by the beautiful grace of the Spirit of God residing in man.

It all comes down to **trust** (leaving selfishness behind and loving God with your whole heart) and **obeying** God’s commandments (treating others with selfless love)—And we do this only *by the power of his grace!* 

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Grace integrates God’s laws into the hearts of his children of faith. This is called the Law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus. His Spirit writing his Laws in your heart!

Messiah, Mizvot, and You

THE GRACE THAT COMES FROM BELIEVING THAT GOD EXISTS

BY KARL D. COKE, PH.D.

There are 248 positive (mandatory) *mitzvot* (commandments) in the *Torah* (Law). There are also 365 negative (mandatory) *mitzvot* (commandments) in the *Torah* (Law). That these words need be explained exposes a severe ignorance within the Christian community. Christians have been kept ignorant because preachers have falsely told them that their “Messiah (Christ) **ended the law**” (a misquotation of Romans 10:4) so that they are “no longer under the law.” As the result, Christians dismiss the entire 613 *mitzvot* (commandments) by calling them “legalistic” and therefore unnecessary in living “under the grace of God.”

Christians are not aware of most of the *mitzvot*. Therefore, they are unaware of how many *mitzvot* they actually “live out” in expressing their love for their Messiah. Why? The only *mitzvot* they hear preached are from the negative (“thou shalt not”) ones. These sermons elicit responses. Many Christian preachers elicit responses following their sermons as a “vote response” to test how good they have just preached. Sermons on “thou shalt not steal, bear false witness, covet,” and the like, are frequently preached in the church precisely because they reveal, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). These sermons take advantage of the obvious. Oddly enough, these sermons are often referred to as “preaching the old-time Gospel.” They are, in

