

Back to Bible Basics

Issue 30

Grace, Faith and Law

Ian McPherson

Because they believe that grace in the New Testament is unconditional, Calvinists affirm that salvation is completely divorced from any human effort. This of course is completely false. The Bible certainly teaches that we are **saved by grace through faith and not by works** (Ephesians 2:8-9), but it just as clearly teaches that we are **justified by works, and not by faith only** - James 2:24. These two passages are not in conflict with one another. They are easily reconciled by the fact that **they refer to two different kinds of works and two different types of law.** These two types of law are described in Romans 8:2 - *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* These two laws are diametrically opposed to each other. One gives life the other death. One saves the other condemns.

What is the "Law of sin and death"? This is plainly stated in Ezekiel 18:4 - *"The soul that sinneth it shall die"*. This law did not originate with God but was imposed on all men after Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan, and disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16-17, 3:1-6). Its consequences are described in Romans 5:12 *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"*. Notice that the reason that death passed on all men was **not** because Adam sinned, **but because all men after him followed his example of disobedience.**

This verse therefore does not teach that **the sin of Adam** passed unconditionally to all men as Calvinism teaches, but rather that each man followed Adam's example and therefore died for his **own sin**. (see Ezekiel 18:20)

What is the "Law of the Spirit of life in Christ"?

This is the law of pardon (the gospel), which came into being through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and finally provided a release from the bondage of sin and death. This is why the New Testament is called *"The perfect law of liberty"* - James 1:25. This law brings *"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."* (Ephesians 1:7).

In Romans 7, Paul explains the difficulty he had living under the Law of Moses before his conversion. No matter how hard he tried, he could not find a way to find grace or forgiveness. There was another law (the law of sin and death) that kept condemning him (Romans 7:22-23). He finished the chapter by giving thanks for the release he finally got through Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:1 says: *"There is therefore now **no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."*** This verse says that **we must be in Christ to be released from the condemnation of the law of sin and death.** In Romans 6:3-4, Paul explains **how to get into Christ:** *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life."***

Therefore, when we rise from the waters of baptism we are saved by grace through faith as Ephesians 2:8-10 teaches. The salvation we receive in Christ, is made possible only because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It is a gift, from the benevolent heart of God. It is unearned and unmerited, but it is **not unconditional**. If we have not been baptized for the remission of sins to get into Christ we are still under the bondage of the law of sin and death (Acts 2:38, 22:16). To be saved we must voluntarily agree to the conditions

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of salvation given the in law of the Spirit of life.

Hebrews 5:8-9 says, *“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* Obedience demands the existence of a clearly defined law that is issued by one who has the authority to enforce it. Grace is therefore **conditional on obedience to Christ.** 

The Age of Miracles has Ended

Brett Rutherford

Last month a gentleman opened a store in my city offering miraculous healing to those who were suffering from various ailments. People like this gentleman who claim to perform miracles in the present age are dangerous and ignorant. They are dangerous because they encourage physically tormented people to ignore their doctor’s advice and seek a solution to their pain that is not scientifically based. Naturally, this can result in the sick getting sicker. Those that claim they can perform miracles today are also ignorant about what the Bible teaches on this subject.

Certainly, the Bible teaches that miracles were performed in a time before the beginning of the second century. God created the universe, the world, and all life by means of a miracle (Genesis 1:1-31). When He had completed this task, He allowed the non-miraculous natural process of reproduction to continue His work of repopulating the earth (Genesis 1:22,25,28). God allowed His prophets in ancient times to occasionally perform miracles to prove their message came from God (Mark 16:15,16).

When the revelation of God’s complete law and plan for the redemption of man was complete the Lord put an end to the miraculous age. This statement of fact is confirmed by the inspired apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13:8-13. In verse eight of this chapter Paul wrote that ***“Charity [love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be [miraculous] knowledge, it shall vanish away.”*** Paul was stating the there was a time when we would have to live without miracles being performed. The apostle

goes on to tell us when the time of miracles would end in verses nine through thirteen. In verse nine Paul pointed out that at the time he wrote this letter to the church at Corinth the prophecy (or revelation of God’s plan) was incomplete. However, in verse ten the apostle states when the ***“perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”*** The context of this statement demands that we conclude that the “perfect” of verse ten is the complete revelation of God’s plan (not the second coming of Jesus as some suggest). The context also demands that what Paul refers to as being “in part” are the miracles which he mentions in verse eight. In verse eleven, Paul explains to the Corinthians that miracles were only given to those in the church during its immature stage. When the church is mature then it will put away those childish things i.e. miracles. Paul confirms that he is writing of the revelation of God by stating that when he was writing this letter, he could not clearly see the law of God because it had not been fully revealed at that point. However, when the last book of the Bible was revealed and written then men will know all that God expects of him. The last book of the Bible closes with a statement that there will be no further additions to revealed the word of God, therefore, there would be no further need of miracles.

Finally, in verse thirteen Paul states that there is coming a time when we will be living with just faith, hope and love, but no miracles. He concludes by stating that the greatest of these three characteristics is love. Love is the greatest because it is eternal, but faith and hope are not. When Christ comes again, we will have need of love, but we will no longer need faith and hope. The point of verse thirteen is that there is a time where humanity will be dwelling on this earth without the benefit of miracles. That age is now.

In addition to Paul’s statement about the end of the miraculous age, the prophet Zechariah also foretold that the age of miracles would end when God’s complete solution for sin was revealed (Zechariah 13:1-4). That solution for sin is found in its complete form in the New Testament. 