

The One Thing God Wants Most From You

Did you know that you can receive the liberating grace of God and then foolishly take the principles that should guide us and make them into a new form of bondage—a whole new system of legalism that breeds fear, oppression and strife?

We are missing the matter of the heart when we do this. We are missing the truth that is at the core of the gospel, and it is that Jesus comes not just to save us but also to remake us in His image. The reality is that grace tempered by law shows us what we should be, while the Spirit of God refashions us so that we can be all that we should be. And all this leads us to the purpose we are destined for: to be like Jesus.

Let's begin with that powerful statement Paul gives us in his Magna Carta of faith, the book of Romans. He wrote, "For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29). There it is. There is the vision that should enflame every Christian heart. We are destined to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Our purpose, and thus our passion, is to be remade to be like Him.

That is where the whole matter of law and grace converges. Some want complete freedom to indulge themselves, and they call it grace. Others want binding precepts for every situation, and they want them ironclad. Most believers are arrayed somewhere between these two. Yet once we understand that we are intended for conformity to the image of Jesus, all extremes, all excuses, all schemes to indulge ourselves in the name of faith and all clinging to the laws of men dissolve in the simple truth that both law and grace serve the purpose of making us into the image of Jesus Christ.

In short, extremes of law and grace fail to reach the heart of the matter, which is the heart of God transplanted into us.

I have always loved that portion of the book of Jeremiah in which God gives us a glimpse of the people He longs for. This was recorded while the people of God were in Babylonian captivity, long before they were given leave to return to their own land. God, speaking through His prophet, uses that moment to look through the telescope of time and describe the kind of covenant and the kind of people that will be a delight to Him. It is a beautiful passage of Scripture, and it is the only place in the Old Testament in which the phrase “New Covenant” is used.

Surely, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law within them and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31-34).

What moves me about this grand passage is how God describes the New Covenant. It will be a covenant in which the law is written on the heart. In the first covenant, God gave the Law, and people were required to obey it. The focus seemed to be on externals—on the doing and the observing. Yet in the New Covenant, the emphasis shifts to the heart. This doesn’t diminish the absolutes of God in any way, but it does make the

source of obedience to God's will a matter of heart rather than a matter of external duties alone.

I think we can glimpse what God wants here. He desires a people who have absorbed His law into their inner being. He intends to have a people who embody the law and don't just observe it as a matter of obligation. The law of God lives in them, delights them, comprises their meditation and makes them into a people given to God.

How beautifully this expresses what God desires from His New Testament, New Covenant people. He doesn't want a lawless people. He also doesn't want a people of law apart from relationship. What He is looking for is a people who love His law—the revelation of God through His statutes and precepts—and who live in a dynamic relationship with God.

✖ *Adapted from Grace by Rod Parsley, copyright 2018, published by Charisma House. This book will help you navigate through the confusion of misunderstanding concerning law and grace, and will give you a scriptural perspective of what they are for New Covenant believers. It will give you a biblical foundation of God's true intention for law and grace. It's a valuable and much-needed resource. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the Week Beginning March 3, 2019

This week, recognize the difference between law and grace and God's intention for New Covenant believers, so that you can walk in Holy Spirit-led freedom and discipline and adhere to the law of God He's written on your heart. Thank Him for the balance between the two as you nurture your relationship with Him. Continue to pray for the nation and ask the Lord to give our leaders wise counsel and use you to sow love instead of discord wherever you go. Continue to pray for worldwide revival, for Israel and other allies, and healing for the nation. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Romans

8:29.