

The Contrast: Self-Effort vs. Rest (Part 2)

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Scripture References

John 1:14, 17

Romans 6:14

2 Timothy 2:15

Romans 4:1-6

Galatians 3:9, 10

Galatians 2:16

Matthew 5:17, 18

Hebrews 4:1-4, 9, 10

Joshua 24:13

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

Summary

The comparison between the old and new covenants takes on significance when we understand where we have been. At one time, man was under the constrictive, condemning Law of Moses; Jesus freed us from it and offered us grace instead. We must ask ourselves whether we are living our lives by the law or by grace. Christianity did not exist before Jesus Christ came; therefore, Christians who are trying to follow Old-Testament law are living by the wrong standards. We must be careful to rightly divide not only the old and new testaments, but also what we read in the New Testament. Since Jesus was perfectly fulfilling all of the law during His ministry, some of what He said was law-based. If we are looking for true peace and real rest, we must let go of our self-efforts and look to Jesus. Good things we could never take credit for will begin showing up in our lives when we start believing in God's works instead of our own.

A. Grace reversed the focus in people's lives, from self-effort to faith in Jesus Christ.

1. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 17).
 - a. Grace *is* the truth; it is the truth that makes men free. Grace is not just a subject or a curriculum; Grace is a person, and His name is Jesus.
 - b. The law required constant performance and strict obedience to every requirement. What God could do for the people was limited to what they did, first.
 - c. There was always the lingering question of whether the people were good enough to be considered righteous. The law caused shame and guilt, and it increased sin.
2. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).
 - a. This plainly tells us what covenant we should be living under.
 - b. The law was designed to give sin dominion over the people.
3. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - a. "The word of truth" is the Word of grace, which came by Jesus Christ.

B. Under the law, works could never justify anyone. Under grace, we are justified by faith.

1. What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what

- saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (Romans 4:1-6).
- a. We are declared righteous because we believe in the works of Jesus.
 2. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Galatians 3:9, 10).
 - a. Under the new covenant, faith is required; like Abraham, we believe God.
 - b. The law was given to incite sin, not to transform us into holiness.
 3. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Galatians 2:16).
 - a. Faith, not performance, makes us righteous.
 - b. During His ministry, Jesus was still operating under the Law of Moses. Therefore, we must rightly divide the New Testament; much of what we read in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is based in the law.
 - c. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17, 18).
 - d. Most Christians say they believe in the finished works of Jesus, but they do not receive them. We simply need to receive by faith and be thankful.

C. The true test of our faith is whether we are at rest. Genuine rest gives us peace of mind.

1. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works...There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his (Hebrews 4:1-4, 9, 10).
 - a. "Rest" in this context means doing what we need to do, but not stressing or worrying about anything. We can rest while we work.
 - b. The man who believes is the one who enters into rest.
 - c. When we say we are righteous and healed, the test to determine if we believe that is whether we are stressed out, or at rest.
 - d. Our peace is our most valuable asset. Anything that costs us our peace is too expensive.
 - e. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was a day of rest; it was also a shadow of Jesus. Now, Jesus is our Sabbath, and we find rest in Him.
2. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat (Joshua 24:13).

- a. God does not need our help or self-effort. He is well able to do things in our lives that we cannot credit to our own labor.
3. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deuteronomy 6:10-12).
 - a. God wants to do good things for us; we simply must believe this if we want them to come to pass. When we believe, we will receive.
 - b. When good things happen, we must not forget that God is behind it all.
 - c. God will never forget about us, no matter what happens; therefore, we must not forget about *Him*.

For more on how our self-efforts block God's grace, click on the link below for the two-message series, *The Number One Enemy to God's Favor*

<http://bit.ly/TheNumberOneEnemytoGodsFavor2MessageSeries>

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