

April 14, 2019



"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

Romans 8:1-2

To fully understand and appreciate God's grace, I am convinced we must first understand the absolute nature of the ***"law of sin and death..."*** In our world not all wrong-doing earns the same consequence. The consequences for telling a 'little white lie' are not as severe as the consequences for murdering someone. In our world not all wrong-doing is the same, but all wrong-doers, no matter what they do wrong, are still wrong-doers. From God's perspective there is only one law; the law of ***"sin and death"***, and under that law all of us are condemned because all of us are sinners.

The Apostle Paul wrote, ***"There is no one righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."*** (Romans 2:10-23) He concluded a bit later in the same letter, ***"For the wages of sin is death..."*** (Romans 6:23) So, the ***"law of sin and death"*** is absolute. All of us are sinners and all of us have earned God's condemnation. All of us deserve to die.

Next we must understand, I believe, that no amount of doing good erases a single sin. No matter what I do I cannot undo a sin. If I have stolen something, even if I return it, I cannot make it like that theft never happened. I cannot remove my sin by doing good so I can never earn my salvation. Thus Paul will write, ***"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*** (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Under the God's ***"law of sin and death"*** I stand before him a sinner justly condemned to death. No matter what I do, no matter how good I am or how much good I do, I cannot change that reality. I am a sinner and I deserve to die eternally, and so are you. But...

But God, moved by his great love and mercy, determined to rescue me and to rescue you from the condemnation we have earned and that we deserve. Understand that God did not rescue us by changing his law as we might. Our Creator is a God of absolute justice and so he cannot and will not change his ***"law of sin and death."*** Since God cannot change his ***"law of sin and death"*** he has chosen instead to satisfy it perfectly for all of us.

Paul concludes his comments in Romans 3 where he writes, ***"There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*** with ***"and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."*** (Romans 3:9-31) Jesus was given by God as the perfect,

blameless sacrifice of atonement for our sins. God satisfied the requirement of the *"law of sin and death"*, one time for all time in the death of Jesus on the cross.

Thus, our Savior's final words on that dark day more than 2000 years ago were *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) With Jesus' death on the cross God provided the death demanded by the *"law of sin and death"* for you and me; Jesus' death was given in place of the death we owe. Grace came into the world on that day with the death of Jesus on the cross.

Grace has arrived. We did not make it come into the world and there is nothing that we can do to deserve that grace which saves us. So, for you and me, the real question is how do we respond to what God has already done?

The Apostle would ask, *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace my increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer! Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him in baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we to may live a new life."* (Romans 6:1-4)

God has given us grace through the death of his one and only Son on the cross. We did not earn that grace and we will never deserve that grace, but we must, I think, constantly ask ourselves what our reasonable response to God's grace needs to be.

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses, to give up our lives for him, and the Apostle tells us that we must die to our sinful natures, to that part of us that leads us to sin. No other response is reasonable. Jesus died for me, and I must die to myself for him. Nothing less makes any sense.