

What is the purpose of a standard that no one can meet? Does God want to send us all to hell? We are accustomed to exchanging something for things we want. If you pick my grapes, I will give you a silver coin which you can use to buy clothing or food or whatever you want. We start to think everything has a price and if I can meet the price then I can have it. It would seem natural that there would be a cost or way to be right with God.

Why did God set the price so high that no one can pay it? God is opposed to bragging. "I got a better deal on my righteousness than you did. I did not do as many bad deeds as you did. I used silver and gold to pay for my righteousness instead of paper money like you did. You were so poor that someone else had to pay for your righteousness." God's method required taking His righteousness as a gift leaving no room for pride (Ephesians 2:8-9). We were all so poor that Jesus had to pay for our righteousness. In light of what is stated above, those who try to earn their righteousness with God end up with eternal punishment because they can not keep the Law...ALL of the LAW.

Grace is what we call believing and accepting that Jesus paid our righteousness debt and that makes us right with God now and forever regardless of what we do or don't do...that includes any past, present and future debts. Consider the first part of **Gal 2:20a I am crucified with Christ:** We are all part of this crucifixion if we are born again. After death, no laws apply. Dead people do not commit sins, well they may vote for the wrong candidate in the USA, but that's a different topic altogether. There are no laws that apply to dead people except how to deal with the body.

Yes, you are very much alive, but there is more to the verse. **Galatians 2:20b...nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me:** If Christ lives in you, are you a good person or a bad person? You are as good as Christ who lives in you. Does Christ commit sins? He had to be sinless to pay our righteousness debt. If Christ lives in you, can you commit sins? Let's look for examples in the scripture. Adam and Eve were declared very good by God and they eat the forbidden fruit. That is not a good example. Christ was not living in Adam and Eve He only walked in the garden with them. How about Moses, he was filled with the Holy Spirit which is part of the Trinity. Moses committed murder. Still a bad example, he was not filled when he committed murder. What about David, he was filled with the Holy Spirit before he became king. King David committed adultery and murder to cover up the adultery. He was called a "man after God's own heart." Maybe, but is the Holy Spirit the same as Christ? What about the Apostle Peter, he was with the Gentiles when the Jews were not around, but he was

too good to associate with the Gentiles when a group of Jews joined the meetings. Okay, obviously saved people commit sins. How then do you explain Christ living in us while we sin?

God gave us a free will and that survived the crucifixion. God wants us to love Him and that cannot be done if we do not have a choice to love God or not. So, I could commit any sin I want, and God is okay with that? There are different ways to answer that question. Your free will means you can commit the sins you choose to, and grace says that you are already forgiven for them. God will have no record of your sins...past, present or future if you are saved because His blood covered all the sins you would commit in the future at the time of the Cross. Keep in mind though that forgiveness does not do away with the consequences of the sin. If a couple are fornicating (having premarital sex) and they get pregnant, they are still pregnant even though they are forgiven. Your question is assuming that the sins you choose would be enjoyable. This implies a wicked heart like the unsaved person. That wicked heart was replaced when Christ moved in. Your new heart will not find these sins enjoyable.

Some would say that we are saying that there are no rules. Not at all, we are saying there are no rules that you can obey to put you in a better standing with God. You are already in the best standing that you can be with Christ and that standing has nothing to do with your behavior. It has everything to do with your relationship. Christ in you gives you the same standing with God that Christ enjoys. God will not love you more and God will not love you less based on your behavior. God already loves you unconditionally, that's what Agape love is all about. What rule, if followed, will improve on that? It is like being at the peak of a mountain. If you go in any direction you will be going down. When you reach perfection, the only place to go is to imperfection. There are rules to avoid consequences. To avoid lung cancer, don't smoke. Adultery is bad for your relationship with your wife and exposes you to STD's. Selfishness has a bad effect on your relationship with others. The Apostle Paul puts it this way; **1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.** In I Corinthians 10:23 Paul **adds but all things edify not.** If you are dead, no laws apply to you, then all things are lawful, but why get addicted or do something that hurts your body and testimony? Just because you can do something doesn't mean that you should.

You say, well it is not taught like that in my church! Then you're in good company because there are not many churches that do teach it right. That is why

you need to study the Bible for yourself. What most churches do is mix the Law and Grace. The parables of new wine in old skins and repairing an old garment with new cloth points out that the Old Testament and New Testament cannot and should not be mixed. That's why it's called a New testament and it even goes on to say that the old things are "passed away" and that ALL things are become "new". It is either all Law with no hope of being righteous in God's eyes or it is all Grace and you cannot do anything to improve your standing with God.

Mixing Grace and Law becomes very confusing. It ends up sounding something like this...your salvation is a free gift, but now that you are saved you need to attend church on a regular basis, tithe, keep the Ten Commandments (actually only 9...you don't really need that Sabbath thing anymore that actually did pass away), love everybody, win souls, read and study your Bible, pray without ceasing and etc. The question that will get you in trouble is, "What happens if I do not do any of these things?" The correct answer is your standing with God is still perfect, but you will miss some of the benefits of living the Christian life here on earth. When you get to heaven you will get the same reward...remember the parable of the vineyard keeper who paid his workers the same no matter what time of day they started working.

This doesn't mean that we aren't disciplined when we are not following the leading of the Holy Spirit in our life. Discipline is different than punishment. Discipline or To Disciple is part of helping us to become the person God would have us to become and to accomplish the things that God would have us to accomplish. God will discipline us as a loving Father disciplines a son to help him become all that he can be. Punishment is based on us committing sin and God paid our punishment on the cross so we cannot pay for it again. It may seem like splitting hairs, but it is an important distinction.

The confusion comes in when you say, "your salvation is a free gift, but you need to do these things." Is it free or do I have to earn part of it? If the price was too high for the first part, how will I be able to meet the price for the remaining part? Will I be able to brag about how much of my salvation I earned by my works? How will I have time or desire to help others if I need to earn part of my own salvation? Am I not as lost this way as I was with the Law? How will I know that I am doing enough to keep my salvation? The only answer that we know is that we receive 100% total forgiveness when we are born again. We did not do anything to earn our righteousness and we cannot do nothing to keep it or to lose it.

Another problem that comes from mixing Law and Grace is conflict. Our church is more righteous than your church because we have higher standards, our ladies dresses are longer, our ladies have better head coverings, our men don't let their hair touch their collar, our folks don't listen to drums, our church has no instruments in it at all...and on and on it goes. You can no longer attend our church because you broke our rule about such and such, we have to break fellowship with you because you went to a movie, I can't speak to you anymore because you eat at restaurants that serve alcohol, never mind the fact that so does your grocery store...and on and on it goes. You cannot be right with God if you... You may not express those dangerous ideas in our church even if you can back them up with scripture. Our church is better because we have a bus ministry, our church is better because we have a homeless ministry, our church is better because we have a food bank, our church is better because...and on and on it goes.

The truth is that God gave all of us a different personality, different likes and dislikes, different tastes, different styles, etc. and He does not want us trying to be clones. He wants to express Himself through us and our unique personalities. We should find these differences exciting instead of a threat.

The key to all of this is that Jesus paid it ALL...that means that we can not and should not try to pay for it. We are not saying that our behavior is not important, it is. We are saying that it has absolutely zero to do with our standing with Christ. We are also saying that maybe you should be showing some of that grace that God shows you and allow someone to be different than you and still love and accept them. I am not saying that you should accept bad behavior, but I am saying that you should not allow it to change a person's standing in grace with you...it doesn't change their standing with God...do you have a higher standard than He does? God calls this grace Agape or unconditional love when we show it to others. My father calls it "Freedom Under Grace" and it's a pretty good principle to live by!