

Two Witnesses

Rockey Jackson, April 22, 2018

“On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.” (Duet. 19:15b)

Jesus sent out the disciples two by two so their message would be confirmed. A computer search for two witnesses in the Bible would bring up many other examples. The Biblical requirement for two witnesses to confirm a fact is well established. This essay looks at some examples of two witnesses that lead to the law and grace as two witnesses giving testimony to God. Then it explores the relationship of saints and sinners with grace and the law of God. It's purpose is to affirm, liberate and empower God's redeemed saints.

Christians see the Old and New Testaments as the two witnesses of God's word. The Old Testament tells the story of the Jews and the New Testament tells the story of Christians. In like manner, the Jews see the Law and the Prophets as two witnesses confirming God's Word. Another way the Jews express it is Moses and Elijah. Moses was the law giver and Elijah was the first of the great prophets.

In Revelation 11:1-13, God appoints two witnesses to prophesy in Jerusalem for 1260 days. They have the power to withhold the rain like Elijah and to strike the earth with every kind of plague like Moses. When they have finished their testimony, the beast, a personification of the Antichrist spirit, attacks and kills them. After three days, God resurrects His two witnesses and takes them to heaven. This is a type of the law and the prophets, the two witnesses of the Jews. It is also a reminder of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua, who Christians know as the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus came as the suffering servant, He was killed, after three days He was resurrected and later He ascended to heaven.

There are two people groups who also witness for God during the Apocalypse. They are often overlooked. Sometimes when a person is about to miss something important their enemy comes to the rescue and points it out. The two groups are referenced twice in Revelation. The first is in Revelation 12:17 after the dragon, a metaphor for Satan, is cast down to the earth: ***“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring-those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.”*** The second reference is in Revelation 14:12 during the Third Woe that reveals the mark of the beast. It says: ***“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”*** The two people groups who testify for God are the Jews who keep God's law and Christians who testify to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The dragon and the beast wage war against God's people. They do it in the following way. First by laws and economic control they steal the saint's freedom to witness about God. If they continue to testify on God's behalf, then the dragon and beast seek to kill the witnesses. This is done in an attempt to destroy all testimony on behalf of the one true God. (For a fuller explanation of this war on God's people, go to [“Steals, Kills and Destroys”](#) in “The Dragon, Personified by the Antichrist.”)

God has established and preserved Jews and Christians as His witnesses. They must be important to Him. The Jews keep God's commandments, a testimony to the law. Christians keep the faith of Jesus

that is a witness to God's saving grace and His forgiveness of sin. The following paragraphs explore law and grace.

The law is the body of divine commandments that are codified in the Old Testament. It declares what people must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Throughout history there have been people who reject relationship with God and say in words or deeds, "Just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to You." They want to know the minimum requirements to go to heaven, but they don't want God to be Lord of their lives. So God gave them the law to satisfy their request. No one is able to obey the law completely. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner, only one black mark to no longer be perfect. Those who obey the law must be perfect to be acceptable to God.

An example of rejecting relationship with God is when the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. God wanted them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in relationship with him as it says in Exodus 19:6a: ***"You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*** The children of Israel were afraid of God and withdrew from relationship with Him. It says in Exodus 20:19, ***"Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'"*** In effect they were saying: just tell us what we must do to be acceptable to God. During the wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel who came out of Egypt did several more things that showed their continued disobedience and rejection of God. That generation died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land.

Grace may be defined as receiving a blessing that we don't deserve. On the other hand, mercy may be defined as not receiving a punishment that we do deserve. The New Testament tells the story of what God was willing to do to make atonement for sin and reconcile a person's relationship with Him. This is salvation from the consequences of sin. It is what theologians call Great Grace. Most often, it is simply referred to as grace. It includes mercy in that redeemed saints don't receive the punishment of separation from God that they do deserve. At the same time they also receive unmerited grace to be restored in their relationship with God, which they don't deserve. It is a free gift that cannot be earned, only received in faith.

The law was given for sinners who want to be acceptable to God by their works, but those who come into relationship with God abide in His grace. They only need to submit to God as their Lord to be forgiven. As the Apostle Paul explained in Romans 7:1-6,

"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that

you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

The story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-26 is an example of someone deciding to live under the law or grace. The young man's first question to Jesus was the age old question, what must I do to have eternal life? Jesus gave the correct answer for someone trying to earn their salvation by their own works. He told the young man to obey the law. The young man replied that he had always obeyed the commandments, but he still wanted to know what more he could do. Jesus perceived that the young man understood that the law could not save him. So in Matthew 19:21, ***“Jesus said unto him, “If you will be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me.””*** (Matthew 19:21) At these words, the young man went away with sorrow in his heart because he was not willing to give up his possessions. There is a great paradox surrounding grace. It is a free gift given by God that no one can purchase. Grace must be received by faith not earned by works. At the same time it will cost the believer everything they have. It is not a wealth transfer, but an attitude adjustment. When a person receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they must humble themselves and give up sovereignty over their lives. They stop seeking their own will and asking the question, what's in it for me? They begin seeking the Lord's will and asking the question, what does God want? Their stuff becomes the Lord's possession and they become His stewards with authority over the resources entrusted to their care. If a person can't get past Jesus as their Lord, then they never make it to Jesus as their savior.

God does not treat everyone the same. Those who are in rebellion to God and want to be accepted by their works must obey the law perfectly to be accepted. They see God as a harsh judge. Those who have submitted themselves to God in faith are forgiven their sins. When they do disobey, they can simply repent to be perfectly restored again. They experience God as a loving father, brother and friend.

From the beginning, God has shown grace to His children. When Adam and Eve sinned and hid from God, He sought them out and provided the way for their relationship to be restored. Law and grace were contrasted in Cain and Abel. Cain offered a sacrifice of his works that was rejected by God. Able offered a sacrifice in faith and was approved by God. Sacrifices performed by the self-righteous, proudly believing that their works make them acceptable to God are worthless, but if the same sacrifices are humbly given in faith that God forgives sin then they are acceptable. Law and grace are also contrasted in other Old Testament stories like Esau and Jacob or Saul and David.

In the law that is kept by the Jews, God graciously placed sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin so relationship could be restored. Each of the sacrifices are in one aspect or another pictures of the

sacrifice of the Perfect Lamb of God, the Jewish Messiah who came as the Suffering Servant. English speaking Christians know him as the Lord Jesus Christ who freely gave himself as a sacrifice to satisfy the requirement that sins are only forgiven by the shedding of innocent blood.

The law is a witness that tells people what they must do to be acceptable to God by their works. Testifying to the law Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18: ***“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”*** Grace is a witness that explains what God will do to make people acceptable to Him by faith. The first Jerusalem council took up the issue of law and grace in Acts 15:1-29. In verses 10-11 Peter says: ***“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”*** In verses 19-21 James says: ***“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.”*** The law is for sinners while grace is for redeemed saints. That is why both witnesses endure until the Lord returns and they do not give conflicting testimony.

Since the law is for sinners and grace is for redeemed saints, then by what standard do redeemed saints live? It is written in Jeremiah 31:33 (and quoted in Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16): ***“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*** Is this a copy of the law that was written on stone tablets? No, this is a law of relationship. It is personalized with the will of God for the individual believer. It takes into account the redeemed saint's level of sanctification, maturity, strengths, weaknesses, gifts and calling. It is obedience to the still small voice of the conscience that leads the believer to do God's will in every situation. Religion demands one rigid set of rules for everyone, the initiate and the proficient. Relationship is with an individual. Jesus said in John 14:15-17: ***“If you love me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*** Redeemed saints live by the law that is written on their hearts as they are led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Grace is not a license to sin. The law that is written on the redeemed saint's heart contains all of the basics, the things that everyone should have learned in kindergarten. Be kind and don't hurt the other children. Be honest and tell the truth. Be content with what you have and don't take the other children's stuff. Obey your parents and others who have proper authority. When redeemed saints receive God as their Lord, they make Him the most important thing in their lives.

Redeemed saints are no longer subject to the letter of the law that was given to sinners. Now they obey the spirit of the law who is their Lord. This goes beyond the minimum requirements. It is the moment by moment obedience to the voice of the Lord. It's not following the religious rules, but walking in relationship with God by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Religious people do not understand this. They demand one set of immutable rules. It is simple and clear cut. God, on the other hand, does not want automatons. His desire is for people who willingly enter into a submitted relationship with Him. He wants them to obey His still small voice of conscience. Relationships are messy. There are misunderstandings. Two egos are not always aligned together. There are disagreements and battles of two different points of view. God understands this. It is what He chose to create. He is willing to work with people, teach them and shape them as long as they choose to stay in a submitted relationship with Him. When His people sin and repent, He forgives them. People also need to forgive God and themselves after there has been stress in the relationship. The relationship is strengthened by overcoming these trials. It endures all tests as long as redeemed saints do not shut the Lord out of their lives by rebellion, loss of faith or sinning unto death.

Redeemed Saints are valuable to the Lord. When they obey the leading of the Spirit, they do God's will in the earth. Second Corinthians 6:15a asks the question: **“And what accord has Christ with Belial?”** Most understand from the context that Belial must be a name for Satan, but many don't know what it means. Belial means worthless. As a title for the devil it means the worthless one. When Lucifer rebelled, he became worthless to God. Belial is not a term used today, but it was in common usage from the time of the Exodus through Israel's Kingdom Age. By obeying the law that has been written on their hearts and the leading of the Holy Spirit, redeemed saints fulfill the purpose for their individual creation. They are no longer worthless children of Belial, but beloved children who have value to God. (Here is a link to a list of scriptures referencing [“Belial.”](#))

The law and grace will continue to witness for God until the second coming of the Lord. The law tells sinners what they must do if they want to be acceptable to God by their own works. Grace explains what God has done to make redeemed saints acceptable to him by faith. God has established and preserved two people groups to carry His testimony throughout the world: Jews who keep the commandments and Christians who have faith in Jesus.

The next essay is about spiritual laws. It will look at three in particular and begin with the most prevalent of all spiritual laws: [“Sowing and Reaping.”](#)