

The Great Experiment Rom 3:21-26

In the late 1700's a group of men came up with the novel idea of a country run by democratic rule. No Monarchy, no Emperor, just people representing others from their home area. Democracy at that time was called the Great Experiment. The world wondered what happens if we let people govern themselves.

Many other great experiments have happened over the centuries in politics, science and sociology. Even in religion. This month is the 500 year anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. An experiment to see if there was a better way to worship and "do church" than the Roman Catholic church and its flaws.

Today we're going to look at the great experiment between law and grace. Which is better? Which one works?

PRAYER

I. Law vs. Grace

A. Why God gave the law

1. One of the more common questions people want to know is why did God give the law in the first place if it couldn't save man?
2. Was God messing with mankind until Jesus came?
3. Was he setting them up to fail?
4. Man has always had a certain amount of thinking "I can do it on my own."
5. But the lesson we learned from the Old Law was that rules can't save you and keeping rules can't save you either. Jas 2:10
6. God needed man to understand that when it comes to righteousness, it was simply impossible to do it on their own.
7. Look at the Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18. Luke 18:10-12 (ESV) — 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men,

extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

8. Notice how the Pharisee was touting how he was worthy on his own merits? He was somehow better than the other guy.

9. Jesus thought differently.

10. We may like to admit we need someone else.

11. Stuart Briscoe tells of a time when he was in the Marines and had to make a grueling march for 50 miles in a swamp filled area of England. He and his group started out just fine, but his friend's feet soon got blistered. Still, he resolutely marched on. Finally it got to a point that Stuart convinced him to let him take his equipment. This was a tough man, he wasn't about to give in and kept pushing on even though his feet were a mess. Even without his equipment, his feet just kept getting worse and he had to lean on Stuart to keep going. Finally after he had done everything he could do within his own power, he allowed Stuart to carry him the rest of the journey to the mark point.

12. I believe God had to let man see how futile it was to try to do it on his own before man would allow God to give us the grace we so badly needed.

13. Paul makes that observation in verses 19-20 Romans 3:19–20 (NLT) — 19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. 20 For no one can ever be made right

with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

14. The Law was never God's final answer.

15. It was what God gave us until we were ready to understand and accept the fact that we cannot attain perfect righteousness on our own.

16. ONE sin separates us from God. And, as vs 23 points out, "ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

17. So, when measured by the Law, the good church person is just as LOST as the worst sinner.

B. Why Grace is better

1. Finally, man begins to realize we need something more, something better.

2. At that time God came in the form of a human.

a) Jesus

b) 100% God, 100% man

c) The perfect lamb; The only sacrifice good enough for God to blot out our sins.

3. In verse 23 we are confronted with the fact that we have all sinned and cannot hope to have the perfection of God.

4. The law just pushed the Jews sins back; It never forgave them.

5. Grace changed all that.

6. Listen to vs. 24-25 Romans 3:24–25 (ESV) — 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by

faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

7. Because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, ALL people, not just Jews, could actually have their sins forgiven and removed.

8. One of the lecture speakers defined "Propitiation" this way: Your sins have already been punished.

9. It's like having your death sentence that you deserve commuted because the judge who sentenced you to death allowed his son to take your place for the lethal injection.

10. But going even further than that, the Judge erases your jail record and expunges your police file.

11. You have a completely new start in life, with nothing holding you back.

12. That's what God did for us.

13. So, when we are measured by grace, the worst sinner is just as SAVED as the good church person.

II. Grace and Faith

A. Understanding Grace

1. Grace in its simplest terms is defined as an undeserved gift.

2. My brother experienced an example of grace when he lived in Georgia. One day one of their members stopped by the office and invited Jeff to lunch, after lunch they stopped at a very nice clothier in Atlanta. Jeff thought this man had something he needed and didn't think much of it until one of the people at the store said they needed to take his measurements. Jeff was mystified until his member said, "I've been wanting to do this for a

while. You'll be measured for a custom suit, shirt, ties and shoes." An act of incredible kindness for no deserved reason; Grace.

3. Grace should be something easy to understand but since its inception there has been confusion.

4. Growing up, I hardly knew anything about Grace. We defined grace as God filling in the gaps after I have done everything I could to earn holiness and then he took care of the rest needed.

5. So, some needed lots of grace and other, better Christians only needed a little grace.

6. CHART 1

7. That Christianity is really about grace PLUS law.

8. CHART 2

9. We base the idea of grace on making up the shortcomings for whatever little we might need to be completely holy.

B. Legalism at the extreme

1. Many Christians by practice rule out grace.

2. They are so legalistic that they make the Pharisees look good.

a) I used to worship at a church that was disfellowshipped for singing during the Lord's Supper in Indianapolis. The legalists called it mixing acts of worship. Now the closest thing I could find to back up their argument was the passage in 1 Cor about doing things decently and in order, but they had to really take that passage out of context to come up with the idea of mixing acts of worship.

b) Another church I know of, sent letters of disfellowship to any members that missed more than x amount of Wednesdays in given

period of time. Now, there are all kinds of things wrong with that, but you get the idea of how legalism destroys the idea of grace.

3. Now, that's legalism at the extreme, but legalism is very much alive and well in the church today.
4. That's it's all about exactly keeping all the rules. Both God's rules and the ones we add to God's rules.
5. We claim you can't be saved by your works, but we practice a much different theology.

C. Grace abused

1. Here in Romans the Christians thought that if they sinned more, then they would get more grace.
2. I don't think that concept has ever gone away.
3. Grace is a gift from God, but it isn't meant to be abused
4. We are often like the Roman Christians in our thinking.
5. "Well, I know God will forgive me if I do this sin, so I am just going to do it."
6. "I was saved, so now I can do whatever I want to do and will go to heaven."
7. That's exactly like the abuse of Grace Paul is talking about here.

D. Justified

1. Our text several times refers to a word, "justified"
2. We throw that word around quite a lot, but I don't know that we see it in the same light that the biblical Christians did.
3. If you watch TV you may have seen the show, "Justified". It basically is about a Texas Ranger who makes sure he justified in shooting the bad guys.
4. Paul uses a term for justified that is only used here in Romans.
 - a) Its meaning is "acquittal from guilt".
 - b) It's a legal term that says the judge has removed guilt from the person involved.

c) By Jesus sacrifice and “propitiation” or atoning sacrifice for our sins, God the righteous Judge, has acquitted or justified us.

5. Remember the charts I showed you a little while ago? Let’s redesign those charts to show reality of our holiness and grace.

6. CHART 3

7. We are so, so, very lost without the grace of God no matter how many good things we do. We need to understand that deep within our heart.

8. There is no possible way to earn our holiness badge.

9. It is an undeserved gift from God.

10. That’s what the gospel is all about. God wants to give us his righteousness because ours will never get us there.

11. CHART 4

E. Faith

1. This whole passage deals with righteousness by faith.

2. As I said before, we are not saved by our acts of faith, but have faith that God saves us by his grace.

3. Romans 3:27 (ESV) — 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

4. Faith in God’s grace isn’t a way to get out of doing anything, but an understanding of how great God is, and how little we can do to save ourselves.

5. When we show that kind of faith in God, he is faithful to save us.

6. That should be a release on our part to desire to serve him faithfully.

7. To LIVE for him as best as we can.

8. God could have and should have condemned man to an eternity in Hell, but he chose to show us grace and justify the sinner seeking Him.

9. Vs 31 tells us that the Law then keenly makes us aware of our need for grace.

10. Faith is embracing the grace of God.

11. Will you have the faith to accept that grace?

12. Or are you still trying to work your own salvation?