

HOLY GRACE

WHY GOD FORGIVES

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Author's Note

This book is mainly intended for the new Christian and the liberal Christian, but also for anyone interested in becoming a Christian; although in the latter case I would recommend reading the other books on this website: “Why God allows Suffering” and “Why God is Angry”, before coming back to this paper.

This book is especially important for the new Christian, because once you accept God's free gift of salvation by receiving the Holy Spirit through repentance and faith in His Son Jesus Christ, you need to continuously learn of the new life that God has bought for you and the reason for it.

Unfortunately, there exists today, as also in the past, the so-called liberal camp within Christianity, who believe that God's grace is a license to continue living the sinful lives they had prior to conversion. Such a belief is tantamount to slapping God in the face; accepting His gift, obtained at great expense, and then using it for the complete opposite of what it was intended for. Whether through ignorance or an unrepentant heart, such Christians have the potential to do more damage to the church than anyone existing outside of it. This book therefore intends to inform or admonish such believers in the hope that they will recommit their lives to Jesus - or perhaps even commit their lives to Him for the first time.

For the final group of readers - those considering becoming a Christian - this book will hopefully provide a clearer picture of what it means to be a Christian and whether that desire is in your heart. If it isn't, please pray that God will place it there, for the only other alternative in life – the way of man - leads to nothing less than bondage and death, from which God desires to free us in this life and for the life to come. Yet if you are reading this at all, then it is likely you are already attracted to the gospel, or are at least seeking to understand that which you recognise is missing in your life. If so, have hope:

So I say to you, Ask and keep on asking and it shall be given you; seek and keep on seeking and you shall find; knock and keep on knocking and the door shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks and keeps on asking receives; and he who seeks and keeps on seeking finds; and to him who knocks and keeps on knocking, the door shall be opened.

Luke 11: 9-10 (AMP)

1. Grace and the Law

Is love exhaustive? No.

Does God forgive everyone? No.

Then what is grace? For if grace was God's way of letting people off the hook from all the things they had done wrong, if grace was a way of shuffling their sins under the carpet so that justice didn't notice, then surely God would forgive everyone, because God does not want to see people condemned to Hell, or even suffering along the way.

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? says the Lord, and not rather that he should turn from his evil way and return [to his God] and live? *Ezekiel 18: 23*

But grace is not God turning a blind eye to sin. Jesus did not die on the cross and suffer the wrath due for sin only to be resurrected three days later for the same world that He had left behind. God does not justify our sinful behaviour. Instead, He covers over it with the blood of the Lamb, on condition of repentance and faith in His Son.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. *1 John 1: 7 (ESV)*

But if God was to pay for unrepentant sin, then He would be excusing sin as well as the sinner, because an unrepentant sinner would sin forever, and by allowing sin to exist forever, God would thereby be excusing it. It is only because of God's mercy towards us that He has allowed sin to exist for as long as it has. Eventually, God must destroy the sinner in order to destroy sin, unless of course the sinner repents and by repentance eventually reaches a point where they no longer sin; only then can God's atoning sacrifice cooperate with justice.

Grace is therefore the means by which God gives sinners who have been justified through faith the ability to break the bondage of sin that leads to everlasting death. His offer is open to everyone, and by this we know that His love is not exhaustive; He does not tire in bringing people to repentance and newness of life. But not everyone chooses to repent from their sinfulness, and so God is unable to forgive everyone.

So grace is for the forgiven, for the justified in Christ. It exists to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. *Romans 8: 28-29 (ESV)*

But how does grace work in conforming us into the image of Jesus? By the Spirit of God, but also in combination with the law. Not by the letter of the law, but by the Spirit of the law.

Do we then by [this] faith make the Law of no effect, overthrow it or make it a dead letter? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law.

Romans 3: 31

God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. *2 Corinthians 3: 6 (ESV)*

Recognise that the law is still upheld; its operation has simply moved from the letter to the Spirit.

So what's the difference between the letter and the Spirit?

The letter of the law refers to the written law of Moses, whereas the Spirit of the law refers to the underlying principles and the greater applications that are revealed in the law of Christ. Therefore they do not contradict each other.

..."You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." *Matthew 22: 37-40 (ESV)*

But the letter of the law kills with regards to both justification and sanctification.

Justification: no one can keep the law in its entirety, and therefore anyone looking to be justified by the law will die the eternal death.

Sanctification: the letter of the law also kills in that whilst the law of Moses is good, it comprises only the very basics of the Law, and can therefore be misused if treated independently of the principles upon which it is built. It is therefore of great use to the lawless, but will hold back the believer.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. *1 Timothy 1: 8-11 (ESV)*

So how does one use the law of Moses unlawfully?

There are at least two ways in which the letter of the law kills, one of which is by focusing only on outward obedience to God, whereby the letter of the law can be abused by contradicting the principles which lie behind it. As an example, the law says that we should not lie, yet it is possible to speak honest words and yet still deceive by what is left unsaid. So by focusing solely on the outward letter of the law, a person can be led away from the true path of God and into the ways of the devil.

This is what the Jewish rabbis had done with the law of Moses, even to the point of writing supplementary law to create get-out-clauses that completely undermined the principles of the law, and for which Jesus chastised them.

For God commanded, Honour your father and your mother, and, He who curses or reviles or speaks evil of or abuses or treats improperly his father or mother, let him surely come to his end by death. But you say, If anyone tells his father or mother, What you would have gained from me [that is, the money and whatever I have that might be used for helping you] is already dedicated as a gift to God, then he is exempt and no longer under obligation to honour and help his father or his mother. So for the sake of your tradition (the rules handed down by your forefathers), you have set aside the Word of God...

Matthew 15: 4-6

The second way in which the letter of the law kills is by limiting holiness. As an example, the law says that it is wrong to commit adultery. But a man may remain within the bounds of the letter of the law by faithfully sleeping with only his wife, whilst he still views pornography, by which he has committed adultery in his heart.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5: 27-28 (ESV)

Once again, without the grace of the Spirit converting a man from the inside, such desire will lead a man away from the true path of God and into the ways of the devil, even if he is keeping the letter of the law.

So the letter kills in that it produces simple outward obedience that is good for the flesh but provides no spiritual nourishment for the soul, whereas the Spirit brings life to the soul by producing sincere and devoted obedience. So where we have the law of Christ revealing to us the principles that support the law of Moses we have true spirit-filled obedience to the law. But the law remains, because the law is righteousness.

Is the Law then contrary and opposed to the promises of God? Of course not! For if a Law had been given which could confer [spiritual] life, then righteousness and right standing with God would certainly have come by Law.

Galatians 3: 21

But for the spirit of grace to work in our lives to this effect, we also need release from the fear of punishment that comes from being in bondage to the law.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

1 John 4: 18

Therefore the new covenant provides us with greater grace, by which we have a greater latitude in which to fail, taking away the capital punishment that was required under the law of Moses.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

John 8: 4-11

2. The Sermon on the Mount and the Law

Whilst Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount magnifies like no other teaching that we cannot be justified by the Law, still there are four consecutive key verses within it that show us that Jesus did not intend for us to do away with the Law.

We will look at these one at a time.

Matthew 5:17. Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfil them.

Jesus speaks quite plainly that He has not come to do away with the Law, but to complete and fulfil it, in accordance with the prophecies of the prophets. Completing the Law means to have completely lived it in all areas of life, and Jesus lived a sinless life so that He could be sacrificed for our sins as the spotless lamb of God; the central message of the prophets. This was not to mean that once Jesus had completed the Law and fulfilled these prophecies that the Law would then be done away with.

Matthew 5:18. For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away and perish, not one smallest letter nor one little hook [identifying certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the Law until all things [it foreshadows] are accomplished.

Have the sky and the earth passed away yet? No.

Will the sky and the earth pass away when Jesus returns to rule? No

The sky and the earth pass away at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, when a new earth and a new heavens are created after the final judgements. By this time everyone, even the Jews, will have the Law of God written on their hearts.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. *Hebrews 8: 10-11 (ESV)*

But until then the Law is still active. Not to justify us, but to prove us. And by it also will the wicked (the unrepentant) be judged and condemned.

Anyone who says that we are no longer to live by the Law will not do well.

Matthew 5:19. Whoever then breaks or does away with or relaxes one of the least [important] of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least [important] in the kingdom of heaven, but he who practices them and teaches others to do so shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Whilst we are no longer bound by the Law, being now free to fail and yet live, still we are encouraged not to transgress it, because the law is righteousness.

As Paul says:

"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. *1 Corinthians 10: 23 (ESV)*

We shouldn't get stressed from not being able to keep the Law, and we shouldn't feel as though we have to keep the Law to gain God's favour, because we already have that through accepting the atoning sacrifice of His Son. But if we want to please God and be considered His friend, then we should be keeping as much of the Law as we can with the help of His Holy Spirit working within us.

You are My friends if you do what I command you. *John 15: 14 (ESV)*

In this life we will never reach the degree of sanctification required to be sinless, but with the Holy Spirit working within us we need not fear we'll never get there. Our burden, the Law, is now light, because Jesus has taken it from us and we are freed up to do our best in keeping it.

Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls.

Matthew 11: 28-29

It is surely clear to anyone that Jesus is not talking about a physical burden, but about a spiritual one; the burden of trying to keep all of the commandments all of the time. He relieves that burden by taking away our *necessity* to keep the Law. But we are still to be driven to reach such a point in the future when we are able to keep it.

Matthew 5:20. For I tell you, unless your righteousness (your uprightness and your right standing with God) is more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now although you may believe that Jesus is teaching here the true and essential doctrine that only His imputed righteousness allows us into the kingdom of heaven, I do not believe that this was His intended teaching at this time, but that He was rather pointing out that the future kingdom of heaven will only be filled with those who are completely sanctified; those who can keep the Law in all its fullness. We can tell this from the defensive direction in which Jesus has been speaking in the last three verses; firstly He says that He has not come to do away with the Law, then He says that the Law will not pass away until the time of the new creation, then He says that anyone who teaches men to do away with the Law will be least in the kingdom of heaven. The whole line of Jesus' argument is that the Law is important and it needs to be followed.

Why? Because, Jesus is saying the future kingdom of heaven is only inhabited by those who are able to keep it. Read together, verses 17 to 20 make this clear.

And Jesus is not yet done. His continuing sermon now takes the qualification up a notch by declaring that even the thoughts of the mind and the intents of the heart need

to come into alignment with God's will in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. His final statement at the end of this chapter sums it up:

You, therefore, must be perfect [growing into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity], as your heavenly Father is perfect. *Matthew 5: 48*

Rather than abolishing the Law, Jesus is actually enhancing it!

To put people off? No.

To increase our spiritual burden? No.

But in order that His hearers might realise two things:

1. How far from perfection they really are
2. How the law of Moses by itself cannot justify or perfect them

From His other teachings recorded throughout the Bible, we know that Jesus also taught how we need to accept Him in order to be both justified and sanctified, but the religious leaders of that day decided to believe that Jesus was teaching against the Law through those teachings (as many once again do today), and this is why our Lord was aiming to reassure the religious establishment that He had not come to do away with the Law, but that rather than trying to abolish it He was actually stressing just how important the Law really is. But by failing to understand this message, they also failed to understand their need for Jesus. Those who did understand their need for Jesus naturally became His followers, but nearly two thousand years later we have the reverse scenario, with many followers of Christ misunderstanding what the religious establishment of that day did not; the importance of the Law.

3. The Importance of the Law

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? *Romans 6: 1-2 (ESV)*

The Law is righteousness; it is a series of commands that describe righteous living. Although we are not to keep the Law in order to be justified, and neither are we to keep the letter of the law by which we lose sight of the forest for the trees, it stands to reason that if the Law is righteousness, then ignoring it is unrighteousness – sin. And we are not to walk in sin. Grace was given so that we might escape from the way of sin and walk in the way of life. If the law says that it is wrong to murder, we cannot now say that by grace we have a license to murder, as though it were somehow no longer wrong. This is obvious. The law of Moses is the beginning of the higher law of Christ, as explained in chapter one. But many will still employ the false and sinful theology of abandoning the law of Moses when applied to the lesser commandments found throughout scripture.

It's important to ask yourself what attracts you to Christ; is it simply because you are free to sin, or is it because you are free to sin whilst working out your salvation? In other words, do you want a license to sin solely for conscience's sake, in order to feel better, or do you want to be set free from sin and judgement in order to become more holy, because you are truly sorry for your sinful behaviour against God?

If you don't want to keep God's Law, but you want freedom to sin so that grace may abound, then your motivation is not being driven by repentance and godly sorrow for the sins you have committed. Rather, your concern is for yourself and not for God's holy standards. You are thus spurning the Son of God.

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10: 26-29 (ESV)

How do you profane the blood of the covenant? How do you outrage the Spirit of grace?

By not using grace for that which is was provided for; holy living.

The writer to the Hebrews is saying that if death was deserving for those who did not strive for holiness in old testament times when it was a burden to them, how much more deserving of death and punishment are those who do not strive for holiness now, when it has been provided for them as a gift by the death of the Holy Son of God! Of such is the evidence of unrepentant hearts.

For certain men have crept in stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door]. Their doom was predicted long ago, ungodly (impious, profane) persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favour) of our God into lawlessness and wantonness and

immorality, and disown and deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). *Jude 4*

The desire to keep the Law has always been the barometer, in old testament times and new, to determine whether you are seeking God's holiness or seeking to avoid it.

Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

Psalm 119: 165 (ESV)

So why then, you might ask, do we have in chapter fifteen of the book of Acts a council meeting where the apostles are determining that it is not necessary for the gentile converts to obey the law of Moses? Well we need to make sure we note the word "necessary". It is not *necessary* to obey the law of Moses in order to be *saved*, but that doesn't mean that obeying the law is no longer a good thing, or not to be encouraged. This becomes apparent as we read further through this chapter in Acts...

Peter, Barnabas and Paul all testify that the gentiles have been saved simply by receiving the Holy Spirit through their faith in Christ, which makes it clear to us that the issue of this debate is salvation and not sanctification; they are instead refuting the need for gentile converts to come under the *ceremonial* laws and thus become Jews *in order to be saved*.

This becomes clearer later on in the meeting, when the apostles decide upon a certain level of obedience to the Law for the gentile converts. The law of Moses is not being abandoned, for the apostles determine that these gentiles should abstain from "things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood." This is not to say that the gentile converts had to keep these restrictions in order to be saved, or that apart from these restrictions any other sinful behaviour was now condoned, but these specific abstentions were determined as minimum conditions for fellowship within the body of Christ.

We see an example of this in the letters to the Corinthians, when Paul commands that the member who has committed incest should be put out from among them, only to be received back once he has repented of his sin. This is also proof that we are still to be held accountable for our sins, although not to be confused with the fact that we will never be condemned for them.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8: 1 (ESV)

But we are still held accountable to God and to each other, to the extent that our eternal rewards and our right standing among each other will be affected. We must therefore be aware that criticism is a necessary part of our sanctification.

As for those who are guilty and persist in sin, rebuke and admonish them in the presence of all, so that the rest may be warned and stand in wholesome awe and fear. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the chosen angels that you guard and keep [these rules] without personal prejudice or favour, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be in a hurry in the laying on of hands [giving the sanction of the church too hastily in reinstating expelled offenders or in ordination in questionable cases], nor share or participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure. *1 Timothy 5: 20-22*

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.
Proverbs 9: 8

Those who are seeking their own justification and license to sin will treat positive criticism as the enemy. They will often mistake criticism as judgemental accusation, and apply the following behaviour of the devil to the remonstrating believer:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."
Revelation 12: 10 (ESV)

The offended Christian must realise that positive criticism is not intended to deny a brother or sister their salvation, as the accuser (the devil) is yearning for, but to build up and sanctify. Solomon in all his wisdom knew this:

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.
Proverbs 27: 6 (NIV)

Of course the believer doing the critiquing must ensure their intention is clear, as we are all sensitive to criticism.

Another importance of the law is that by obedience to it we become both salt and light to the world.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble, and good deeds and recognize and honour and praise and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.
Matthew 5: 16

Notice that there is nothing here about running to and fro, committing all kinds of indecency, so that men may see our joy in being set free from the Law to the praise of our Father in heaven. Quite the opposite, in fact. And if we move onto the subsequent verse in Jesus' sermon, we will see that the context in which He speaks is the Law:

Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfil them. *Matthew 5: 17*

In fact, Jesus said that one of the signs of an antichrist spirit within the latter day churches would that of lawlessness.

And many false prophets will rise up and deceive and lead many into error. And the love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness and iniquity. *Matthew 24: 11-12*

And we also know that when Jesus returns to rule this earth during His millennial reign, the Law will be the standard by which all peoples and nations are required to live by.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be [firmly] established as the highest of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. And many people shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways and

that we may walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. *Isaiah 2: 2-3*

So can it be any clearer that we are still encouraged to follow the Law?

4. The Importance of Grace

In answer to the question at the end of the previous chapter, yes, the message of law and grace does still need to be made clearer, because we still have to address the issue of legalism, which is easily confused with adherence to the Law.

Legalism is not the following of any set of given laws, but the specific following of a *strict* set of laws that take *precedence* over the need of the individual.

As an example, we have Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath having been made for man and not man for the Sabbath. If keeping the Sabbath was wrong, God would not have given it to Israel in the first place. But Jesus clearly makes the point that it was made for our benefit. The problem is when a set of rules that in most cases are good are upheld in extreme situations when they are not good; Jesus recounts the story of King David, how he entered into the temple and ate from the holy bread when it was not lawful to do so, but how he was justified in doing so because he was in desperate need. Jesus also gives other examples, about how a person is justified to expend effort on the Sabbath if someone is in need. But as a general rule, the Sabbath observances of rest and worship are for our benefit. This principle is not just true for the Sabbath, but for all areas of the Law.

Some might try and argue from Galatians that the Law was *only* intended to show people how sinful they were until they were led to Christ for forgiveness, and then they could do away with the Law.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Galatians 3: 23-36 (ESV)

But Paul is speaking here of justification, not sanctification. In fact we only have to go back two verses to find Paul explaining that in the plan of salvation the Law is not contrary to faith. The rest of the chapter then goes on to reveal that, just as in chapter fifteen of Acts, the idea that gentile converts need to become Jews in order to be saved, is being refuted.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Romans 6: 15

By faith we are no longer under the Law; we no longer need to obey it in order to be justified. But as we have already explored through passages in the New Testament, the Law is not done away with.

Now there has also been some confusion as to what it means for the Law to cease in Christ.

For Christ is the end of the Law [the limit at which it ceases to be, for the Law leads up to Him Who is the fulfilment of its types, and in Him the purpose which it was designed to accomplish is fulfilled. That is, the purpose of the Law is fulfilled in Him] as the means of

righteousness (right relationship to God) for everyone who trusts in and adheres to and relies on Him. *Romans 10: 4*

This is not to say that the Law ceases to be altogether, but that solely in Jesus it ceases to be, because He is the embodiment of the Law. Three times in the above verse we are told that in Jesus the Law was fulfilled, not abolished. It ends in Him, just as it will end in us at the time of the new creation, when we too have become the full embodiment of the Law through our completed sanctification.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. *Romans 8: 3-4 (ESV)*

Note that for justification the Law is *fulfilled in Jesus* (*Romans 10:4* above), but for sanctification the Law is *fulfilled in us* (*Romans 8:3-4* above).

For the law of the Spirit of life [which is] in Christ Jesus [the law of our new being] has freed me from the law of sin and of death. *Romans 8: 2*

In case this is not yet understood - the law of life means we can follow the more demanding and thus more spiritually liberating law of Christ because of the Spirit of life within us, that the law might be fulfilled in us.

So for now we still do well to follow the Law. As long as it is in the Spirit and free from legalistic requirements, we are following the higher law of Christ, which is not a restriction but freedom from the power of sin. As the psalmist said:

Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. *Psalms 94: 12-13*

Only if we are looking to the Law for justification does it become a restriction, because of our inability to keep it. Paul had to battle with this misunderstanding with the Corinthians, who were an example of today's liberals.

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain... We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. *2 Corinthians 6: 1 + 11-13 (ESV)*

The Corinthians' affection for sinful behaviour was what restricted them in their freedom in Christ - not His Law which they had abandoned. Our freedom in Christ, the grace that we have received, is designed to bring us into obedience to the Law...

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. *2 Corinthians 9: 8 (ESV)*

...whilst in the meantime Christ's fulfilment of the Law justifies us.

[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began

2 Timothy 1: 9

So, that is the importance of grace; to live righteously, to be holy. Once we have received the forgiveness that comes only through Christ Jesus, grace gives us both the ability and the time we need to work out our salvation in order to become like Him, with no condemnation for our failures along the way.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2: 12-13 (ESV)

And let us not forget that holy calling for which we are striving for.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Philippians 3: 14-21 (ESV)

Amen.

Afterward

If anyone comes away from this book and feels more stressed or burdened to keep the Law, that has not been my objective and I apologise. The true born again Christian is completely forgiven for all time, and the atonement of Jesus Christ is all sufficient for salvation. This book is simply to show that the atonement was completed so that we might be able to keep the Law and not discard it; to follow it where we are able out of love and not necessity, that the world may more readily know Jesus through us, to the praise of our Father Who is in heaven.