

# Why Grace Leads to Obedience

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**"Guilty" was the jury's verdict.** The judge's sentence: death by lethal injection. For Wey Ward, a convicted murderer, the nightmare of that December day seven years ago had played endlessly through his mind.

In a jealous rage he had taken a man's life. He realized that he deserved the death penalty for what he had done. No amount of agonizing could change that.

Regardless of how many times he pleaded for forgiveness from the victim's family, no matter how much he wished he could relive events, one persistent fact remained. Ward deserved to die. The law was the law. He was guilty of a capital crime and he had to pay the price for his sin.

With nowhere else to turn, he begged mercy from the governor.

## **"You Have Been Pardoned"**

Just 10 minutes before his scheduled execution, Wey Ward heard the most unbelievably wonderful words ever spoken to a condemned man:

"By the grace of the governor of this state, you have been pardoned."

"I can't believe it," he said to himself. "He forgave me!"

Humbly thankful for the gracious pardon, Ward vowed from that point on that he would be a model citizen. And he never was in trouble with the law again.

Although fictitious, the foregoing illustrates the concept of scriptural grace and how it works in the believer's life.

In the words of Nathan the prophet, *"We are that man."* We all deserve to die because we are all sinners, Romans 5:12, 1John 1:10. We earned our fate and nothing we do ourselves can change that fact. Only the mercy of Yahweh and the sacrificial death of Yahshua can save us. Being sinless, our Savior paid the death penalty in our place-the penalty that rightfully belongs to us alone.

Yahweh's grace in sending His Son to die for us is our only salvation. Like the governor in Wey Ward's case, only Yahweh can pardon our transgressions.

## **Our Behavior Must Change**

Now suppose the condemned man went right out and repeated the crime for which he was pardoned. Wouldn't his actions violate the spirit of the pardon? Certainly! The governor didn't save him so that he could go out do it all again. Would not the courts and the governor deal with the man much more harshly the next time? Absolutely!

## **Yahweh's grace is no different.**

The crux of the matter is, what's the point of Yahweh's grace-His favor on sinful humanity-if once pardoned of our transgressions we go right back to breaking His holy laws? Is not His grace granted with the understanding that we will change our behavior? The Bible shows that this is exactly what Yahweh expects.

## **His Grace Has a Purpose.**

In Romans 6 Paul explains the operation of Yahweh's grace on human beings. The chapter is a profound study in the transformation that takes place in the life of a True Worshiper under Yahweh's grace.

In the last verse of the previous chapter Paul writes, *"That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Yahshua the Messiah our Master."* The words, *"grace reign through righteousness"* are key. *The New Testament in Modern English* translates the phrase, *"now grace is the ruling factor, with righteousness as its purpose and its end."*

Grace is not static. It is active and it is to work in the believer's life.

Yahweh's grace has an objective: that we will turn from sin to live rightly. Obedience is the means by which that is accomplished. That means to keep His law, since sin is clearly defined as the transgression of the law, 1John 3:4.

Paul explains further in chapter 6 how grace works. *"What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Yahweh forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (vv. 1-2)

To accept Yahweh's grace-His pardon for our sins-and then to continue our sinful lives as if nothing had happened is to pervert the whole idea of grace. We make Yahweh's grace a mistake if we accept His pardon only to repeat the sins.

Hebrews 10:26-27 warns of deliberate sin: *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."*

Further in the chapter we find this solemn warning:

*"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of Elohim, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* (Heb. 10:29) The word "despite" means to insult. If we continue in sin after receiving Yahweh's grace we show contempt for that grace.

Willfully practicing sin, and making a mistake and sinning, are two different things. In Galatians 6:1 Paul writes of the difference in sins. *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you be tempted."* "Overtaken" is the Greek *prolambano*, and means to take beforehand, to surprise. "Fault" is the word *paraptoma* and signifies a slip or lapse, rather than a deliberate act.

An unintentional slip is certainly covered by grace. But if you deliberately or willfully continue to repeat the sin, then you are mocking the spirit of grace and are subject to wrath.

Paul continues in verses 3-12 of Romans 6, asking how can we, who have followed Yahshua into the waters of baptism and have buried our old carnal life, come out and continue in our old ways? Particularly since baptism means a putting to death of the *"old man."* We must become dead to sin, he tells us in verse 11.

A person who has yielded his life to Yahweh, having put to death his sins, must now live a new life of obedience, Paul explains in verse 13. As he puts it, we become *"instruments of righteousness."* Righteousness derives from a Greek word meaning right or just. The opposite is wrong or sin, which is lawbreaking.

### **Law's Penalty of No Effect**

Moving on in verse 14 Paul writes, *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law but under grace."* Does he mean, after all he has just said about giving up sin, that we are no longer under any obligation to obey Yahweh's law? How is this possible when the law **defines** what sin is? (*"For where no law is, there is no transgression,"* Rom. 4:15.) Let's examine the verse by segments.

First, for sin not to have dominion over us we have to be out from under it. The only way to accomplish that is by obedience to the law because sin by definition is the transgression of the law (1John 3:4). We have only this option: obey the law, which is righteousness-or not obey, which is sin. If we obey, we can't be blamed.

The next part of the verse reads, "*For you are not under the law but under grace.*" How clear! Through Yahweh's grace (His pardon) our former sins will not be held against us. We therefore will not need to pay the penalty, which the law exacts, for the sins we committed.

Under grace the law's penalty is wiped away because the debt exacted by our sins was paid through the shed blood of Yahshua. The wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23. In our case it's Yahshua's death in exchange for our death.

Can this passage mean that we are free from the law now to go out and sin again, as some seem to say? The Greek word for grace is *charis* and is defined as the divine influence on the heart and its reflection in one's life.

Simply put, under Yahweh's grace we emulate His righteous nature. We begin to think and act as He does. That means refraining from sin, which is the same as adhering to his standard-His law.

When we come in line with His law by righteous living, the law with its incrimination and penalties for the disobedient has no claim on us. In Romans 8:1-2 Paul explains this concept: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Messiah Yahshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yahshua has made me free from the law of sin and death.*"

The significant word is "condemnation," which results in lawbreaking. When we live according to Yahweh's statutes we are innocent of sin and therefore free from punishment. You cannot legally be arrested for doing good. No sheriff will throw you in jail for saving a drowning man. There is no law against it!

When you do good you are not under the consequence of any law. The demands of the law are already met; therefore, you have no debt to the law. This is what Paul means by not being under the law. It does not mean the law is no longer in effect, as we will now show.

### **No Law, No Need Of Grace**

We've seen that grace is a pardon for sin. Sin results when a law of Yahweh is broken. Therefore, the need to pardon us for sin exists because the law is in operation.

Understand: A murderer would not be condemned to die if there were no law against murder, and he would not need a pardon.

Yahweh offers His grace and sent Yahshua to die for our sins for the plain and simple fact that the law **is** in effect. Because the law is in force the penalty for breaking it is also real, or else we would have no need to fear sin's consequences.

But some will argue that Yahshua came to do away with the law, and then we are put under grace. This idea falls flat if we can find grace already in the Old Testament.

Sure enough, in Genesis 6:8 we find "*Noah found grace in the eyes of Yahweh*" and therefore Yahweh saved him from the penalty of death by drowning. Exodus 34:5-7 reads like something out of Galatians-speaking of Yahweh's mercy, grace, long-suffering, and abundance in goodness and truth.

If grace existed in the days of ancient Israel, then why does Yahweh still command Israel to keep the Ten Commandments? Why should it be any different with us?

We are under grace so long as we do not continue to break the law. Grace is not a permanent condition of the believer but a gift granted by Almighty Yahweh. That gift can be rejected through our attitude of rebellion and acts of disobedience.

*"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of Elohim; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled,"* Hebrews 12:15.

### **Grace Is No Permission to Sin**

"But does that mean that I am not free to do as I please under grace?" you may be asking. Let's let Paul answer that question. The very next verse of this chapter, Romans 6:15, reads, *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? Yahweh forbid! Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"*

Under Yahweh's grace and because of His grace we are expected to live obedient lives, doing what He commands of us as His special people.

Verse 18 reads, *"Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness."* To be servants of righteousness is the opposite of being servants of sinfulness (lawlessness). This is shown in verse 20: *"For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness."*

The converse is just as true: To be righteous is to be free from sin. And as we have demonstrated, to be free of sin is defined as being obedient to His law.

The same concept is found in Galatians 5:16, where Paul writes, *"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."*

If grace means we are not under obligation to keep Yahweh's laws, then grace grants permission to sin! To this the prophet Jeremiah speaks for Yahweh in 7:9-10: *"Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other deities whom you know not; And come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?"* Yahweh answers that because of these sins and that kind of attitude, *"I will cast you out of my sight,"* verse 15.

### **We Can't Earn Salvation**

Being law observant has nothing to do with "earning" salvation. I don't get any special reward for paying my taxes on time, for keeping the peace, for not robbing my neighbor, or mugging a stranger.

Paul writes in the Book of Ephesians, *"For by grace are you saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of Yahweh: Not of works, lest any man should boast,"* 2:8-9.

Nothing we humans can do earns us a place in the Kingdom because Yahweh has not defined obedience that way. Obedience simply engenders Yahweh's favor and demonstrates our faith in and love for Him.

Obedience to His way of life also shows our gratitude for His pardoning of our past sins. Disobedience, contrarily, reveals indifference toward what He has done for us and, more seriously, CONTEMPT for Him and His Savior.

Now if I **don't** pay my taxes, if I rob a bank, disturb the peace, or mug someone, I will face punishment. Similarly, Yahweh says in Galatians 5:19-21 that those who practice the sins (lawbreaking) listed will not inherit the Kingdom.

### **Yahweh Loves, Rewards Obedience**

Yahweh's people love Him and want above all else to please Him. In several Scriptures we find that the love of Yahweh is defined as the keeping of His commandments. (See John 14:15, 21; 1John 2:5; 5:3; 2John 6.)

Rest assured, only Yahweh can grant salvation-at His pleasure. Therefore, we want to be sure we have His favor by being obedient to what He commands. *"And being made perfect He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him,"* we read in Hebrews 5:9.

Law keeping is not salvation by works. Rather, it is salvation by obedience. Obedience can't guarantee us a position in the Kingdom, but disobedience surely will keep us from it!

James tells us that faith without works is dead, being alone (2:17). Our works perfect our faith, James writes in verses 21-22. *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Do you see how faith wrought with his works, and by his works was faith made perfect?"*

We complete our faith by following through with action. A faith that is sincere is proved by what we do with it and how we live it. Let us help you be obedient to Yahweh in all things.

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