

TRUE GRACE

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Grace is *chen* in Hebrew and *charis* in Greek. In both languages it may be translated as *favor*. However, in relation to G-d, grace is not passive favor, such as "to receive favor," rather it is active favor, such as "to be favored with a gift." This active form is the way grace is to be understood in Scripture. In fact, *charis* is translated as *gift* many times in the New Covenant writings in connection with the gifts of the Set-apart Spirit (1 Cor 12:4). In this context it clearly means an endowment or enablement.

G-d's grace is His willingness to provide us with His enablement. When "Noah found grace in the eyes of the L-RD" (Genesis 6:8), it says in the Hebrew "*Noach matsa chen b'ayini YHVH.*" This may also be translated, "By the vision of the L-RD Noah came forth enabled," or even "Noah was gifted through the insight of YHVH." Grace does not mean that G-d accepts us regardless of our actions, but that G-d makes us acceptable. He provides the means whereby we can be accepted by Him.

The belief that grace and mercy are near synonyms, almost interchangeable concepts, is a gross misunderstanding by many. So much of Christianity thinks of grace as a kind of blanket mercy which is constantly forgiving all sin and cancels out the Law of G-d. Many have believed the error that grace allows them to disobey G-d's Law; that since grace abounds, sin may abound without penalty. This is especially taught by those who wish to ignore the eternal Law of G-d, or certain parts of it. Such doctrine is a nearly fatal error, because it waters down G-d's righteousness and calls into question His eternal faithfulness. It also misconstrues His kindness, and many have gone astray and departed from the truth because of this misinformation. Disdain for G-d's Law puts one in mortal danger. Hopefully, this danger can be reduced through a fuller understanding of the Word.

Mercy is the forgiveness of G-d that comes as a result of sincere repentance (changing directions). When we sin, then sincerely repent of that sin by changing our actions and relying on His righteousness, G-d will forgive our sin. "*Sin is transgression of the Law [Torah],*" (1 John 3:4). Therefore, when we know we have transgressed the Law of G-d we are required to repent of our way and return to walking after His Law, which is His light. His mercy allows us to return to Him.

"For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah [Law] is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life," (Proverbs 6:23).

"Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Torah, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Torah of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him," (Daniel 9:11).

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8,9). "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not perform the truth. But if we walk in the light, just as He is in the light, we have fellowship together, and the blood of Yeshua HaMashiach, His Son cleanses us from all sin," (1 John 1:6,7).

This clearly shows that G-d's mercy abounds to forgive sin because of the blood sacrifice of Yeshua. However, walking in the light of G-d, His Torah, is also necessary for fellowship to continue with Him. G-d's light is all the instruction that He has ever spoken.

G-d's grace, on the other hand, is the very thing we need in order to perform that which is pleasing to Him, namely to obey His Law. This is why Sha'ul (Paul) said, *"Where sin abounds grace does much more abound,"* (Romans 5:20). Sha'ul did not mean that sin no longer mattered, or that grace would overlook sin. Rather, it is grace that is needed to bring righteousness into action in our lives, which is why he states, *"That as sin has ruled until death, even so might grace rule through righteousness until eternal life by Adonai Yeshua HaMashiach,"* (Romans 5:21).

Grace rules through righteousness. So grace is the enablement to act out righteousness. Grace does not forgive sin, nor does it cancel the Law! *"Shall we continue sinning that grace may abound? May it never be! How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer in it?"* (Romans 6:1,2). Grace, then, is the power not to sin! Not to transgress the Law! The goal is to become like Messiah Yeshua who was perfect in all points of the Law, "full of grace and truth."

So the difference is this: mercy forgives us of sin, but it is grace that enables us not to sin.

When Paul said we are no longer under the Law, but under grace (Romans 6:14, 15), he was not negating the Law, but instead emphasizing our power toward the Law because of grace. The Law is no longer something pressing on us to showcase how unlawful we are. Rather, now grace is pressing on us to fill us with the righteous nature of G-d Himself. In such a case the Law is no longer a burden, but rather the usual result of being filled with the divine nature. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome,"* (1 John 5:3).

It is the grace of G-d toward us that provides us with the New Covenant in Messiah Yeshua. The prophet noted that this "new covenant" was to be marked by a new relationship with the Law [Torah]; not negating the Law, but putting it in us! *"Behold, the days come, say YHVH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers...But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says YHVH, I will put my Torah [Law] in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people,"* (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

We may say then, that the grace of G-d concerning the New Covenant is the ability to perform the Law with power from the inner person. So the purpose of Sha'ul, in all his teaching about the Law, must not have been to put it away. But rather, he is showing off the grace of G-d in turning us from viewing the Law as a stumbling block, to it being placed in our very being. He argues that the Law is not something we *must* do, but something we *cannot help* but do. Read his letters in this context and see if it does not become clear. Only in this context is Paul *not* in direct conflict with the words of Yeshua and the prophets that G-d's Torah shall never pass away.

Oh the goodness, mercy and grace of YHVH!

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