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MINISTRIES

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Grace, Faith & Obedience: Understanding the Relationship

What are grace, faith and obedience, and how do they all work together? Are some of these concepts pitted against each other or do they work together in perfect harmony? Do they change and evolve? Or, does God have a consistent plan and method throughout all of time?

Even though these concepts are critical to a basic Scriptural understanding, there is often too much confusion surrounding the Biblical meaning and relationship of these terms.

Have you ever heard someone say that obeying a commandment of God is also rejecting his grace, or maybe you believe that yourself, then this teaching should serve well. As always, we encourage you to test this study to his Word. This presentation will define what grace, faith, and obedience are, discuss the relationship between these terms, and then bring in Scripture to offer additional clarity, definition, and support.

So, let's define the terms.

Grace. Biblical grace is often defined simply as “unmerited favor.” It is a gift that you did not earn. God's grace is simply God extending his “unmerited favor” on his undeserving people. There is nothing we can do to earn God's grace.

Grace, by definition, is freely given by God through no action of our own. God owes us nothing. We are all undeserving of any blessing and only deserve the curse, which is death, because we have all sinned, that is, we have broken God's law. God's ultimate act of grace is his gift of salvation, saving us from the second death.

Faith. Faith is the foundation and source of all of our behavior. Faith is believing, trusting, and committing ourselves to God and his Word. Having faith in God and Yeshua as the Son of God, is the very same as stating one has faith (or believes, commits and trusts) in God's Word.

It is not possible to believe in Yeshua, but then not believe in Scripture. Both Yeshua and the Scriptures are God's Word. If God's Word is true, then both Yeshua and the Scriptures must be true. There should be nothing in Scripture that we should conclude is "no longer true."

Obedience and Works. Obedience is the result of our true faith. It is the resulting output of believing, committing, and trusting in God's Word after faith and trust has already been established. The more faith one has in God's Word, the more that faith will manifest as obedience to God's Word.

Obedying God is simply a matter of following his instructions. His instructions are outlined by his commandments in his Word. God's commandments are often referred to as his law, or in Hebrew, the Torah, which means "instructions." God's holiness and righteousness are defined by his own law that has existed since the beginning.

We are commanded to be holy as he is holy (holy simply means being set apart). When one believes with all their heart, soul, and mind that something is true, then one behaves and acts as though it is true by applying it to their life to the best of their ability.

Let's define the relationship between grace, faith, and obedience.

We have all fallen short of God's perfect righteousness as defined by his law—God's instructions for man. God's law was given to us to bless us if we obey, and curse us if we disobey (that is, sin).

We have all broken God's law, and thus we were all under the curse and doomed to die. Paul calls this the law of sin and death. The breaking of God's law is sin, and the consequence of sin is eternal death. Once we receive grace through faith, we are no longer under the law of sin and death, as was written by Paul in Romans chapters five through eight. For more on this we would recommend the [Pauline Paradox Series](#) from 119 Ministries.

God offered man a way to eternal life if we have faith, if we believe, commit, and trust in him. God did not have to offer this to us for any reason whatsoever. He owes us nothing, and we can do nothing to escape what we rightfully deserve, which is eternal death. Thus, anything God extends as a benefit to us is an act of grace (or unmerited favor). His plan of salvation is a gift he gave us because he loves us.

God's Word outlined a plan for our salvation from eternal death. That plan was manifest in Yeshua our Messiah at the appointed time. Yeshua dying on the cross abolished the curse that resulted from our disobedience to God's law. The finished work on the cross is the ultimate act of God's grace. We certainly did not deserve to be saved from eternal death and did nothing to earn it. Yeshua's work on the cross is God's ultimate gift of grace for mankind. God's grace is a demonstration of his love for us.

The finished work on the cross eliminated the curse (the law of sin and death) for everyone that has faith, and our failure to keep God's law (sin) will not be held against us like those that will be judged and experience eternal death. We will not be present at the Great White Throne judgment that leads to eternal death. It is those who have faith (commit, believe, and trust) in God and his Word that will have eternal life.

We know that there are eternal rewards associated with good works:

Romans 2:6-10

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and

do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

(see also: Matthew 5:19; 25:34-36)

So, how do we get access to these rewards? Is it a matter of doing enough good things that outweigh the bad things? Well, no, that is not enough. The consequence, the curse for our sin is death. There is no way for us to have eternal blessings if we are dead. But Christ died on our behalf, he redeemed us from that curse. If we have faith in him, we have eternal life, and we have access to the eternal rewards that come from our good works. Through Christ, we are able to live, and to enjoy the blessings that come from obeying the law forever.

We know for certain that we are saved from the curse (the second death) when we realize a continuous desire to keep God's commandments. If we have no faith, then we will have no desire to keep God's commandments. And why would we? Keeping the law doesn't make much sense if we're going to die anyway. There are only two paths: the narrow path that leads to life and the broad path that leads to destruction. Few will take the narrow path.

If we have faith, we will desire to keep God's commandments, and the greater the faith, the greater the desire. Our faith is evidenced by our obedience. Because of our faith, we strive to be obedient. Obedience is the keeping of God's commandments. Disobedience is the breaking of God's commandments (which is sin).

Grace is God demonstrating his love for us. Our obedience is us demonstrating our love in return. That is the relationship of love Scripture declares we have with God himself.

So, what we need to do now is pull in Scripture to support and expand on the definition of, and the relationship between, grace, faith, and obedience.

First, we will start with grace. Second, we will cover obedience.

Throughout all of this, we will discuss how faith plays a role in both grace and obedience.

Grace. Grace is not just a "New Testament" concept. God has always been a God of grace. He does not change (Malachi 3:6).

The Lord has extended his grace since the Garden by offering us grace through faith to keep us from experiencing the alternative, the second death, eternal death. When God extended grace to his people, it was always to those who had much faith, which was evidenced by their obedience to God's law.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness—he taught God's law.

2 Peter 2:5 (KJV)

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;”

And Noah received God’s grace.

Genesis 6:8 (NKJV)

“But Noah **found grace** in the eyes of the LORD [YHWH].”

Moses received God’s grace.

Exodus 33:12 (NKJV)

“Then Moses said to the LORD [YHWH], ‘See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people.’ But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also **found grace** in My sight.’”

Those who walk upright are those who walk out their faith in obedience and thus receive his grace. Walking upright simply means striving to keep God’s commandments.

Psalms 84:11 (NKJV)

“For the LORD [YHWH] God is a sun and shield: the LORD [YHWH] **will give grace** and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Through Yeshua, God fully poured out his grace. His work provided eternal salvation. This is why there is so much excitement and emphasis on grace in the New Testament. This is not because grace was a new thing, but because God had just provided the ultimate grace that he had promised long ago.

Zechariah 12:10 (NKJV)

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the **Spirit of grace** and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

God shows us his love through Yeshua by extending grace to those who have faith (believe, commit, and trust) in his Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,

A Summary of Grace:

1. God’s grace is not something that is new in the New Testament Scriptures.
2. God’s grace through Yeshua is how God revealed his love for us in full.
3. God’s grace is given to those who place faith and trust in God, his Word, and Word made flesh (Yeshua).

Now let’s take a look at obedience.

Obedience. Once a person has faith and has entered into God’s plan of salvation, then they can walk in

obedience. Obedience is not a means to salvation, but it is evidence of salvation. Obedience is the behavior that results from having faith.

Scripture defines and describes obedience in many different ways:

Obedience is our purpose.
Obedience is the evidence of our faith.
Obedience is loving God and loving others.
Obedience is the same as not sinning.
Obedience to his law makes us his treasured possession.
Obedience is to be our delight.
Obedience is to be our righteousness.
Obedience leads to blessings and eternal rewards.

So, here we go...

1. **Obedience is our purpose.** The whole purpose of man is to obey God by striving to keep his commandments.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Therefore, our “Purpose Driven Life” is exactly what is written and commanded by God in Scripture.

When we are obedient to God, we fulfill his purpose for our life. God does not want us deciding what our purpose is for ourselves, and he does not want others deciding what our purpose is for us. If our purpose is not coming from God himself, then something or someone else has become our Lord. We cannot serve two masters.

Here’s how Scripture defines God’s law:

1. **The Law blesses and curses.** It blesses us when we obey, and curses us when we disobey.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD [YHWH] your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD [YHWH] your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

(See also: Psalm 112:1, 119:1-2; 128:1; Proverbs 8:32; Isaiah 56:2; Matthew 5:6, 10; Luke 11:28; James 1:25; 1 Peter 3:14; and Revelation 22:14)

2. **The Law defines sin.** If we break the law of God, that is sin. If we observe the law of God, we stay out of sin.

1 John 3:4

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

(See also: Jeremiah 44:23; Ezekiel 18:21; Daniel 9:11; Romans 3:20, 7:7)

3.) **The Law is perfect.** Perfect means that it cannot be made better. Perfect means that if you take any of it away, it is no longer perfect.

Psalm 19:7

The law of the LORD [YHWH] is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD [YHWH] is sure, making wise the simple;

(See James 1:25)

4.) **The Law is liberty, or freedom.**

Psalm 119:44-45 (NKJV)

So I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.

That means if you walk in the law of God, you are free; but free from what? Free from sin. Yeshua was free from sin because he walked in the law of God. John said we should walk like Yeshua walked (1 John 2:6). Walk like he walked...*that* is why Christ is freedom. Remember, it is the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). What is Truth?

(See also Psalm 119:45; James 1:25, and 2:12)

5.) **The Law is the truth.** Psalm 119:142 says it best:

Psalm 119:142

Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true.

(See also Malachi 2:6; Romans 2:20; Galatians 5:7; Psalm 43:2-4; and John 8:31-32)

6.) **The Law is the way.**

Exodus 18:20

and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.

(See also Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3; Psalm 119:1; Proverbs 6:23; Isaiah 2:3; Malachi 2:8; Mark 12:14; and Acts 24:14)

7.) **The Law is life**

Proverbs 6:23

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

(See also Job 33:30; Psalm 36:9; and Revelation 22:14)

8.) **The Law is light.**

Once again...

Proverbs 6:23

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

(See also Job 24:13, 29:3; Psalm 36:9, 43:2-4, 119:105; Isaiah 2:5, 8:20, 51:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14; and 1 John 1:7)

9.) **Yeshua is the way, truth, and life. He is perfect. He is freedom.** These are all metaphors for the Law of God, the Torah.

John 14:6

Jesus [Yeshua] said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

(See Proverbs 6:32; Proverbs 13:13-15; Psalm 119:142; Psalm 119:44-45; Psalm 19:7)

10.) **The Law is God's instructions on how to love God, and how to love others.**

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

(See also Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10, 6:5, 7:10, 11:13, 22, 30:16; Leviticus 19:18; Nehemiah 1:5; Daniel 9:4; Matthew 10:39, 16:25, 22:35-37; John 14:15, 21; Romans 13:9; and 2 John 1:6)

11.) The Law is for everyone.

The Law is also for those who were once Gentiles but are now grafted into Israel (Ephesians 2). There is no such thing as "the Law is just for the Jews."

Numbers 15:15-16

For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD [YHWH]. One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."

(See also Exodus 12:19, 38, 49; Leviticus 19:34, 24:22; Numbers 9:14, 15:29; the book of Ruth; Isaiah 42:6, 60:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37; Matthew 5:14; Ephesians 2:10-13; Acts 13:47; Romans 11:16-27; 1 John 1:7, and 2:10)

Now that we covered how Scripture defines the Law of God, watch how that definition answers why obedience defines the whole purpose of man.

Our obedience shows the world how God blesses us.

Our obedience shows the world how to not sin.

Our obedience shows the world that his ways are perfect.

Our obedience shows the world that his ways are freedom.
Our obedience shows the world that he is the only Way.
Our obedience shows the world that he is the only source of Truth.
Our obedience shows the world that only he can give life.
Our obedience shines his light on the darkness of the world.
Our obedience points them to Christ as the Savior.
Our obedience shows the world true love.

Our obedience is OUR WITNESS to the nations.

The next time we hear someone speaking negatively about God's law (his instructions), we can now see the absurdity of such a statement. Once we establish faith, obedience is everything. Our obedience is what God uses to accomplish his will for mankind, and he pours out his Spirit on those who want to be an increasing part of the Father's will.

As noted in Ecclesiastes 12:13, fearing God is another part of our purpose. Fearing God is often associated with keeping his commandments and gaining wisdom. For example:

Psalm 111:10

The fear of the LORD [YHWH] is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Job 28:28

And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the LORD [YHWH], that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'

When we have great reverence or fear for the Lord, we are motivated to keep his commandments. We are in effect turning away from evil which then leads to wisdom and understanding. Thus, not keeping God's commandments is showing a lack of fear of God and reverence for his ways. Disrespecting God's ways is the same as disrespecting God himself.

2. Obedience is the evidence of our faith. Occasionally, in Scripture, it seems like obedience is what leads to salvation. For example:

Hebrews 5:9

And being made perfect, he became **the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,**

And...

Matthew 19:16-17

And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. **If you would enter life, keep the commandments.**"

And...

Acts 5:32

And we are witnesses to these things, **and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**"

God saved us even though we do not have good works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

However, salvation is by grace through faith and not by works. So, in reality, obedience is the resulting output of our faith in God's Word. When we have faith and trust in God and his Word, it will manifest as obedience to God and his Word in our lives. If one is not striving to obey God's Word out of a response to God's love, then that individual does not have faith.

Romans 1:5 (NIV1984)

“Through Him and for His name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among **all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.**”

Romans 16:26 (NKJV)

“but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, **so that all nations might believe and obey Him.**” (that's the same as the Great Commission - Matthew 28:19-20)

James 2:18

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**

In John 3:36, John wrote...

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; **whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.**

It is unfortunate this verse is not as well-known as John 3:16. Do you see the significant point of the passage? The words “believe” and “obey” are put in positions of equality. The writer is using the technique of repetition of the opposite as a means of emphasis (“he who believes...but he who does not obey.”) The person who “does not obey” Christ, does not truly “believe” in the Messiah.

Another good illustration is found in Acts 16:30-33, the conversion of the Philippian jailor. In reply to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas told the jailor to believe.

Many like to read this verse and stop; and then say, “He was only told to believe in order to be saved.” The man was then told the “Word of the Lord” and after which he was baptized (which he could only have learned when they spoke God's Word to him).

Look especially at verse thirty-four: the jailor rejoiced greatly, “having believed in God.” How did they know that he believed? What did his believing include? It included baptism as evidence of his faith.

A third example is in Hebrews chapters three and four.

Hebrews 3:18-19

And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were **disobedient**?
So we see that they were unable to enter because of **unbelief**.

How do we know that they had unbelief? We know they had unbelief because they were disobedient. Just as obedience is evidence of belief, disobedience is evidence of unbelief.

Compare this with Hebrews 4:2 where the Israelites fell in the wilderness because they were not united with those who heard it in faith. And also 4:6, which says they failed to enter the Promised Land “because of disobedience.”

Please notice that in these passages, faith and obedience are used interchangeably; their disobedience was a manifestation of their unbelief. The point is that we must take care not to follow the same example of disobedience (4:11). It should also be noted that we have not yet entered into that rest, but we are still striving to enter it. This is why Scripture teaches us that true belief is more than just intellectual ascension. Belief is the act of committing and trusting because of your belief. That is true faith. What matters is whether your belief is evidenced in your behavior and actions. That is when we know the “belief” is real. This is also known in Scripture as obedience or disobedience.

Just before James stated that without works faith is dead, he said:

James 2:19

You believe that God is one; you do well. **Even the demons believe—and shudder!**

The demons also “believe” and apparently fear God, but we do not see them committing and trusting in God and his Word, do we? That is the difference that Scripture is trying to teach us. If we truly believe in God, then we would also believe the Bible; and if we truly believe in the Bible, we will then do what the Bible tells us to do. How could we not? If we do not, then we are no better than the demons.

What happens if we decide to continue to be intentionally disobedient after we have already been sanctified by the blood of Christ?

That is a good question. There is a situation of sinning accidentally, you know, making a mistake, or sinning in complete ignorance of his Word. In contrast, willfully and habitually sinning is the same as thumbing one’s nose at God and still expecting to stay in his grace.

Let’s ask this question: if one is willfully sinning, is that showing faith? Is that showing belief, commitment, and trust in God? We would expect the answer to be “No.”

Once we have been exposed to the Truth, we have a choice to either react to it appropriately in faith or continue to try to hide from it. A person hides in the darkness, not in the light. We are afforded grace if we are truly deceived. We are to be judged in the end to be either least or great in the Kingdom (Matthew 5:17-19), regardless if we were deceived.

When we receive the truth and choose to ignore it, that is a different story. We are then insulting the Spirit of grace, and that results in God’s wrath. We are then destroying our faith in his Word and thus faith in God Himself. As a side note, also observe how sinning is connected with setting aside the law of Moses.

Hebrews 10:26-31

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 **trampled underfoot the Son of God**, and has **profaned the blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified, and has **outraged the Spirit of grace**? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

There will be many that thought that they would be excited about the return of the Lord, but Scripture says many will be ashamed. Those who are covered by the truth of God’s Word will not be ashamed. Those hiding behind the coverings of the doctrines of men contrary to the truth will be ashamed. Just like in the garden, the knowledge of sin exposed their nakedness and all they had was fig leaves. There will be many just wearing fig leaves on the Day of the Lord, hiding from the Lord in shame instead of wrapped and clothed in the Word of God.

It is NOT possible to have faith and at the same time NOT strive to be obedient to God’s Word.

James 2:17, 26

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Habitual and intentional sin, breaking God’s law, is a symptom of something seriously wrong in a person’s faith after they have been “sanctified by the blood of the covenant.” This is why faith is called the *evidence* of things not seen and the *substance* of things hoped for.

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Obedience is how we observe faith in ourselves and others. It is how we will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:20). It is the substance and it is the evidence. In fact, if one does not have a desire to keep God’s commandments, then one does not know God or love God.

That sounds like a rather harsh statement to make, but that is what Scripture clearly teaches. We know that we have God’s Spirit when we strive to keep his commandments.

1 John 3:24

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

1 John 2:3, 5-6

And by this **we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments...but whoever keeps his word**, in him truly the **love of God is perfected**. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him **ought to walk in the same way in which he walked**.

By keeping his commandments, we know whether we know God, and at the same time, we are observing the perfect way to love God.

Even Abraham, the “man of faith” (Galatians 3:9), kept God’s law as evidence of his faith.

Genesis 26:5

because Abraham **obeyed** my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

See how obedience is intimately connected to faith and knowing God? All the Scripture we have mentioned is just a sample of a theme that runs from Genesis through Revelation. These concepts are inseparable. If faith exists, then so must works, otherwise it is not true faith. If works exist, they must be supported by faith in God and his Word in order to be true salvation resulting by faith.

Just to be clear, this is not a works-based salvation model. It is faith that produces both works and salvation. Works cannot produce salvation.

In summary, the extent of your faith in God can be directly measured by how much you desire to keep his commandments, as having faith is evidenced by our keeping of his commandments. By not keeping his commandments we are demonstrating that we lack faith and that we doubt God and his Word. This is the same as not knowing God, and also the same as not loving him.

This concludes the first part of Grace, Faith, and Obedience. In part 2 we will continue with learning how obedience is loving God and loving others.

We hope that this study has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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