

God's Grace ~ Part 11

"Perhaps there is no word in the Bible more precious than Grace."

~ Rick Countryman, Senior Pastor, Big Valley Grace Community Church
Modesto, Ca.

"God's Grace – It Really Is Amazing – Part B"

In my last post, we began to look at how amazing God's Grace is from the Tanakh. Today, we will consider God's gracious provision for our desperate plight from the Brit Hadashah.

As Sha'ul said, **"Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua."** (Romans 8:1) We are no longer estranged from God. God is no longer against us; He is now for us. Sha'ul also said, **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:31) Both of these wonderful changes occurred because of God's Grace and despite our sin and guilt: **"Where sin proliferated, grace proliferated even more."** (Romans 5:20)

Free From Accusation

The Brit Hadashah is replete with assurances of God's forgiveness to those who have trusted in Yeshua. Just one Scripture will suffice to show again the contrast between our dreadful condition and God's love, mercy, and grace in reaching out to us. **"You, who at one time were separated from God and had a hostile attitude towards him because of your wicked deeds, He has now reconciled in the Son's physical body through his death; in order to present you holy and without defect or reproach before himself."** (Colossians 1:21-22)

Let me call your attention to the last phrase of this passage, *"without defect or reproach."* Does this phrase describe the way you think about yourself? Or do you often, in your mind, find yourself standing in God's courtroom hearing His pronouncement, "Guilty?" If the latter is true, you are not living by grace.

If you have never received the free gift of salvation by trusting in Yeshua, then of course you are guilty. You certainly are not living by grace; rather, you are under the wrath of God, and you will eventually experience the full force of His wrath. Your greatest need is to trust in Yeshua for your salvation, for the forgiveness of your sins, and for the free gift of eternal life.

On the other hand, if you have trusted Yeshua as your Savior, then all the expressions of God's forgiveness are true of you. As we saw in my last post: He has removed your sins as far as the east is from the west; He has put them behind His back and thrown them into the depths of the sea; and, He has blotted them out of His record book and promised never to bring them up again. You are free from accusation, not because of anything you have done, but because of His grace alone through Yeshua. God's Grace is really amazing.

Grace to Others

Grace is not only to be received by us; it is also to be extended to others. However, our relationship to others is different from God's relationship to us. He is the infinitely superior Judge and moral Governor of the universe. We are all sinners and are on an equal plane with one another. So we cannot exercise grace as God does, but we can relate to one another as those who have received grace and who wish to operate on the principles of grace.

In fact, we will not experience the peace with God and the joy of God if we are not willing to extend grace to others. This is the point of Yeshua's parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-34. He told the story of a man who was forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents (millions of dollars), but who was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii (a few dollars). The unstated truth in the parable, of

course, is that our debt of sin to God is "millions of dollars," whereas the debt of others to us is, by comparison, only a few dollars.

In this parable, the king is God the Father. As the hugeness of the first debt illustrates the enormity of our sin, so its cancellation attests to and celebrates God's amazing grace.

The person who is living by grace sees this vast contrast between his own sins against God and the offenses of others against him. He forgives others because he himself has been so graciously forgiven. He realizes that, by receiving God's forgiveness through Yeshua, he has forfeited the right to be offended when others hurt him. He practices the admonition of Sha'ul, in Ephesians 4:32: "Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you." God's Grace is really amazing.

God's Blessing and Grace

Sha'ul wrote: *"Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua. We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Ruach who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Yeshua died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person - though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Yeshua died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life! And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Yeshua. We have now received this reconciliation through Him."* (Romans 5:1-11 HSCB adapted)

One benefit of our salvation is the full experience of God's blessing and grace (verse 2). As His forgiven people, we have the indescribable privilege of living day-by-day in fellowship with God Himself as the blessed recipients of His forgiving grace and love. Freed from slavery to sin and the law, we can now delight in the undeserved experience of God's Grace. We live and die, Sha'ul emphasizes, only by the mercy and kindness of God. Everything good that we have and are, both in this life and in the life beyond, is a gift of God's Grace. As a result, the Messianic life is to be understood not as a heavy, burdensome obligation but as a joyful, free response to God's Grace and goodness to us.

As with the peace we have with God, the grace of God must never be taken for granted. We must never forget that God's kindness is wholly undeserved - that we merit nothing but punishment for our sins. When we appreciate grace for what it really is, it will always be understood as genuinely amazing grace - undeserved kindness. Grace is no longer grace if we cease to think of it as amazing. If we are fully to appreciate God's Grace for what it is, then, we must never forget the terrible nature of our sin in God's sight and God's holy judgment on it. Grace is perceived as grace only by those who take God's judgment seriously. This is why Sha'ul devoted so much attention to emphasizing the judgment of God on human sin in chapters 1-3 of Romans; he knew that it is crucial for us to feel the full weight of divine judgment if we are to feel the full greatness of divine grace. In Romans, God's holiness and judgment serve as the backdrop against which the Good News of God's Grace is magnificently highlighted. Truly, God's Grace is amazing.

In my next post in this series of "God's Grace" we will begin to explore how we are compelled by love to grow in grace.