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Grace, Faith & Obedience: Understanding the Relationship

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

If you have ever heard someone saying that listening and obeying a commandment of God is also rejecting His grace, or if you believe that as well, then this teaching should serve well. As always, we encourage you to test this study to His Word. This study will define the terms, discuss the relationship, and then bring in Scripture to offer additional clarity, definition and support.

So, let's define the terms.

Grace. In any dictionary, grace is often defined simply as “unmerited favor.” It is the receipt of something in which you did nothing to earn. God's grace is simply God extending His “unmerited favor” on His undeserving people. There is nothing that we can do to earn Yahweh's grace.

Grace by its own definition means that it 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 (death) because we have all failed at keeping God's law perfectly. 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 the believing, committing and trusting in God and His Word. God is defined as His Word, and Jesus (His Hebrew name, Yeshua) is defined as the Word made flesh. Having faith in God (and Yeshua) is the very same as stating one has faith (believes, commits and trusts) in God's Word.

It is simply not possible to state that one has faith in Yeshua and then conclude that something in

Scripture to no longer be true as Yeshua is the Word and the Word is Yeshua. If Yeshua is true, then God's Word is completely true, even today. There should be nothing in Scripture that we should conclude is "no longer true." God's Word and God Himself are inseparable and are Scripturally one and the same.

Yeshua walked and practiced God's Word perfectly and thus is defined as "the Word made flesh" in the book of John. Therefore, faith in God, faith in Yeshua, and faith in the Word are all one and the same.

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/trust has already been established. The more faith one has in God's Word, the more that faith will manifest in their observed behavior as obedience and the doing of God's Word and will.

Obedying God is simply a matter of obeying His instructions. His instructions are outlined by His commandments in His Word. The summary of all commandments are often referred to as His law (in Hebrew, Torah), which simply meaning "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 the heart, soul and mind that something is true. Consequently, one behaves and acts as though it is true by completely applying it in their life to the best of their ability.

Let's define the relationship of these terms.

We have all fallen short of God's perfect righteousness as defined by His law - the instructions for man. God's law was given to us to bless us if we obey, and curse us if we disobey (which is sin). God's instructions (His Word) have existed since the beginning, thus nothing in God's Word is ever new, we are just always in a state of trying to understand His Word better, which is actually the exact same as understanding God Himself better.

We have all broken God's law, and thus we were all under the curse (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 under 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.

God offered man a way to eternal life if we have faith (if we believe, if we commit, and trust) in God and His Word. God did not have to offer this to us for any reason whatsoever. He owes us nothing and we can do nothing ourselves 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 an extension of His grace out of His love for us.

God's Word outlined a plan for our salvation from God's wrath (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 the second death and did nothing to earn it. Yeshua is God's ultimate act 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 those having faith, and all of the instances of our failures at keeping God's law (sin) will not be held against us like those that

will be judged and experience the second death. We will not be present at the Great White Throne judgment that leads to the second death. It is those who have faith (believe, commit, trust) in Him and His Word that will have eternal life.

When we keep God's law, we still receive the blessings as originally prescribed, but not the curse of the second death when we fail. When we fail, it is covered under grace through the work on the cross. When we are obedient, we still receive the blessings. We still receive all of the blessings of our obedience in this life and the blessings also extend into eternity as part of our rewards, or crowns, that we receive at the Lord's return.

This is the bema seat judgment in which all believers will experience, which is different than the Great White Throne judgment (the second death). At our judgment it will be determined whether we will be least or great in the Kingdom for all eternity. What we do and practice in His Word as believers now will echo into eternity on that day.

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. No faith equates to no desire to keep God's commandments. There are only two paths: the narrow path leading to the narrow gate and the broad path that leads to destruction. Few will take the narrow path.

If we have faith, we will then have a 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 God's commandments (His law). Disobedience (lawlessness) is defined as breaking 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 declare we have with God Himself.

Here is how Scripture defines God's law:

1. The Law blesses (obey) and curses (disobey). It blesses us when we obey, and we are cursed when we disobey.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

²⁶See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse - ²⁷the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; ²⁸the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God.

(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 sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”

(See also, Jeremiah 44:23; Ezekiel 18:21; Daniel 9:11; Romans 3:20, 7:7; and 1 John 3:4)

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 is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

(See James 1:25)

4. The Law is liberty/freedom.

Psalm 119:44-45

⁴⁴So I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever. ⁴⁵And 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. Remember how Yeshua walked? He walked the law of God. Remember how Christ said to walk, how John said we should walk (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 an everlasting righteousness, and your law is truth.”

(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

“Teach them His decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.”

(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 this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life.”

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

8. The Law is light.

Proverbs 6:23

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; Reproofs of instruction 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. The Law is Yeshua (Jesus), the Word made flesh. (He is PERFECT + He is FREEDOM + He is the WAY + the TRUTH + He is the LIFE + and He is the LIGHT. The Law = Jesus).

Revelation 19:13

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

(See Psalm 27:1; John 1:1-14, 14:5-11; 1 John 1:7)

10. The Law is also for those who were once Gentiles (the foreigner or alien) but are now grafted into Israel.

Numbers 15:15-16

¹⁵One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger (alien/foreigner/Gentile) who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. ¹⁶One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells 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)

11. The Law is God’s instructions on how to love God, and how to love others, and how to not love yourself.

1 John 5:2-3

²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For 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)

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, and there are at least 8 points to cover about obedience:

1. Obedience is our purpose.
2. Obedience is the evidence of our faith.
3. Obedience is loving God and loving others.

4. Obedience is the same as not sinning.
5. Obedience to His law makes us His peculiar people.
6. Obedience is to be our delight.
7. Obedience is righteousness.
8. Obedience leads to blessings and eternal rewards.

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. When God extended grace to His people, it was always to those who had much faith, which was evident in their behavior as obedience to God’s law.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness - he taught God’s law.

2 Peter 2:5

“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

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

Moses received God’s grace.

Exodus 33:12

“Then Moses said to the LORD, ‘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 their faith in obedience and thus receive His grace. Walking upright simply means striving to keep God’s commandments.

Psalms 84:11

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

The giving of Yeshua the Messiah was when God poured out in full the spirit of His grace. Though God had been extending His grace from the beginning, Yeshua (the Word made flesh) is the ultimate act of grace for those who have faith in God and His Word. It is through His work that enabled our 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’s promised act of ultimate grace in His love for us was just fulfilled.

Zechariah 12:10

“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 unconditional love by His ultimate act of grace through Yeshua to those who have faith (believe, commit, trust) in His Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,”

A Summary of Grace:

1. God’s grace is not something that is new in the New Testament Scripture.
2. God’s grace through Yeshua is the primary way of how God revealed His love for us in full.
3. Recipients of God’s grace are those who place faith and trust in God, His Word, and Word made flesh (Yeshua).

Obedience. Once a person has faith and has entered into God’s plan of salvation, then the concept of obedience plays a role in that person’s life. Thus, obedience is not a means to salvation, but actually a direct result of our faith.

Scripture defines and describes obedience in many different ways:

1. Obedience is our purpose.
2. Obedience is the evidence of our faith.
3. Obedience is loving God and loving others.
4. Obedience is the same as not sinning.
5. Obedience to His law makes us His peculiar people.
6. Obedience is to be our delight.
7. Obedience is righteousness.
8. 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

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: 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. Deriving any other purpose for our lives other than what is written in Scripture is deriving our purpose from man instead of from our Lord.

God simply wants His people to be obedient because in that His will is and will be accomplished. 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.

We already covered how Scripture defines the law of God. Now, 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 is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding.”

Job 28:28

“And unto man he said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.’”

When we have great reverence (fear) for the Lord, we are motivated to keep His commandments (departing from evil), which then leads to wisdom. Thus, not keeping God's commandments is showing a lack of fear to God and disrespecting 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.

Hebrews 5:9

“And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;”

And...

Matthew 19:16-17

¹⁶And, behold, one came and said unto Him, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” ¹⁷So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that

is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

And...

Acts 5:32

“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

We know for certain that obedience cannot earn us God’s plan of salvation and thus negate God’s grace and love for us. If we were to trust in our own works for God’s salvation, then who are we placing our trust and faith in, God or ourselves?

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest any man should boast.

That is as clear as day. Salvation is by grace through faith and not by works. So, in reality, obedience is just 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 (grace), then that individual does not have faith.

Romans 1:5

“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

“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 without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

In John 3:36, John wrote...

John 3:36

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

It is unfortunate this verse is not as well-known as verse 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 Christ.

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.”

Please read on, however, and observe that other things were told the man (“the Word of the Lord”), after which he was baptized (which he could only have learned when they spoke to him God’s Word).

Look especially at verse thirty-four: the jailor rejoiced greatly, “having believed in God.” What did his believing include? It included obedience to the “Word of the Lord.” It included baptism.

A third example is in Hebrews chapters three and four.

Hebrews 3:18-19

¹⁸And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Compare this with Hebrews 4:2 where the Israelites fell in the wilderness because the word “was not united by 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, of course, 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 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 there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

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 is what 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 would 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, 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 offerings of grace.

Let me ask this question: if one is willfully sinning (even in secret), is there really faith evident in the sense of believing, committing and in trusting God’s Word? I 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 in the false coverings of men’s doctrine, instead of applying God’s true doctrine. 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 or faith in His Word and thus faith in God Himself.

Hebrews 10:26-31

²⁶If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹It is a dreadful 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, on the Day 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

¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ... ²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

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

"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 is not keeping God's commandments in the best way that he knows how, then he does not know God, nor does he 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

"And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us."

1 John 2:3, 5

³And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ... ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

⁶Whoever claims to live in him must also walk as Jesus did.

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 (before Moses) kept God's law as evidence of His faith.

Genesis 26:5

“Because that 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 in the Bible. 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 declaring a works-based salvation model. It is faith that produces both works and salvation, thus 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 our lack of faith and we doubt God and His Word. This is the same as not knowing God, and also the same as not loving Him.

3. Obedience is loving God and loving others. Now, remember, as established earlier, grace is God's demonstration of His love for us. Scripture also says:

1 John 4:19

“We love him, because He first loved us.”

So, we are to love God back because He loved us first (by His grace).

The question then becomes, “How do we love God?” Are we to invent our own way to love God, or does God tell us how He wants to be loved?

Scripture says:

1 John 2:3-6

³And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keeps His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. ⁶He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

1 John 5:3

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”

Thus, keeping God's commandments *is* the means God gave us to love Him back. The way to love God

is through keeping God's commandments.

John 14:15

[“If you love me, keep My commandments.”](#)

All love is defined through the keeping of God's commandments. Thus, if we find a commandment from God in the Bible, God intends that to be a means to love God and love others.

2 John 1:6

[“And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, that, as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.”](#)

This is nothing new. God's law has always been about loving God and loving others since the beginning. (See Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 5:10, 6:5, 7:10, 11:13, 33, 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; 1 John 5:2-3; and 2 John 1:6)

This is what the believer's walk should be. The same commandments Yeshua walked are the same commandments we should walk. We should not walk differently than Yeshua Himself. If you walk differently than Yeshua are you really following Him? Many forget that Yeshua (or Jesus) was a Sabbath keeping, kosher eating, Feast observing, and tassel wearing Jew.

You do not see many believers following those commandments that Jesus walked. Sometimes it is wise to stop and pause and ask the question, “Why?” Why do I walk differently than my Savior? Do I follow a “different Yeshua?”

1 John 2:6

[“Whomever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”](#)

How did Yeshua walk? What was Yeshua obedient to?

Yeshua kept God's commandments perfectly. He showed His love for the Father and love for others perfectly in His perfect obedience to God's law. Are we to not at least strive for the same?

Yes, it is true we are unable to walk perfectly like He did and we will fail, but that is what the whole purpose of His grace. We are still commanded to walk and follow Him the best that we can with the Spirit leading and supporting us the whole way.

It is because of God's grace that we should want to love God back (1 John 4:19), and Scripture defines loving God back as keeping all of His commandments, not just some of them. This is why it is such a tragedy if anyone remotely suggests that we should focus more on God's grace, which is God loving us) instead of obedience which is us loving God back.

Who, in their right mind, would want to tell Yeshua when He returns that it was more important to focus on God loving us (grace) than us loving Him back in obedience? What type of relationship would that be? Would you tell your spouse that you are not interested in loving them back, but it is more important that they should love you?

Our relationship with God is intended to be a two sided relationship (with grace as love and obedience as love), not a one sided relationship (or just grace).

Now, what is more important to you, grace or obedience? What is more important, loving back or being loved? Do you not see why Scripture says many will be ashamed at His return? He will ask many, "Why didn't you love Me?" Scripture says that at His coming, many will be ashamed, and we are called to be obedient to Him so that we will not be ashamed.

This is why Yeshua stated:

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷Jesus said unto him, "[You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.](#)" (This is Yeshua quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 in the Law of God as written by Moses.) ³⁸"This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like unto it, [you should love your neighbor as yourself](#)" (This is Jesus quoting Leviticus 19:18 in the Law of God) ⁴⁰"On these two commandments [hang all the law and the prophets.](#)"

Yeshua stated the most important commandment in God's Law, as written by Moses is, "[love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.](#)"

As it was just reviewed, Scripture clearly declares that loving God is accomplished by observing practicing all, not just some, of God's commandments. If obedience is the act of loving God, then it logically follows that what Scripture is teaching is that we should strive to be obedient to His commandments (love God) with all of our heart, all of our soul, and with all of our mind. As was covered earlier, it should be our whole purpose (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

This should not be a surprising conclusion to arrive at, but to make it even easier, Yeshua draws the conclusion for us in the very next verse (40). He does not even force us to know the rest of Scripture and to draw the correct conclusions. He tells us the exact same thing. Yeshua teaches us this principle, which was not a new principle, in the very next verse in Matthew 22:40 when He stated that ALL (not just some) of the Law and Prophets hangs off of these two commandments.

This means that not having idols is an important way to love God. Likewise, keeping His Sabbath is also just as important in loving God.

If Yeshua Himself stated that ALL of the Law and Prophets is the way to love God and to love others, then why in the world would we begin to believe that some commandments no longer have anything to do with love?

Imagine two strings. At the top of one string it says, "Love God," and at the top of the other string it says, "Love Others." At the other end of both of these strings is EVERY SINGLE OTHER COMMANDMENT FOUND IN GOD'S WORD, all of the LAW and Prophets.

This is why EVERY commandment of God is important, because loving God and loving others IS important. The Law and Prophets is just another way of saying what we know as the Old Testament today.

In summary, how much you love God can be directly measured by how much you desire to keep His commandments, as loving God is defined by keeping His commandments. If we are to love God because He first loved us, and loving God is defined by keeping His commandments, then disobedience is simply being ungrateful for His grace (His love).

Disobedience is the exact opposite of loving God in His eyes. Every time we sin we might as well look at our Lord and state that we do not love Him. Yes, He forgives us in His grace, but nonetheless this is what our sin means to Him. This is the same God who sent His Son to die for us for no other reason than to express His love to us.

4. **Obedience is the same as NOT sinning.** Yeshua taught us to “go and sin no more.”

John 5:14

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’”

John 8:11

“She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’”

Is it a fair thing to say that God does not want us to sin? For anyone who has read even a portion of Scripture, it does not take long to learn that God does not want His people to sin. Every believer should understand already that God does not want us to sin, that we are to avoid sin at every opportunity.

John said it well, we are to strive not to sin, but if we do sin then the grace of Jesus Christ covers us in our faith.

1 John 2:1

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

The question then becomes, “What is sin?” If God wants us to avoid sin, He should at least define it for us so that we do not need to play the guessing game on these matters, right?

Sin is simply defined in Scripture as the breaking of God’s law (breaking His instructions). It is not that complicated.

1 John 3:4

“Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

Romans 3:20

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Thus, being obedient to God’s law is the same thing as avoiding sin.

Yeshua also taught us that it is our inward heart that either breaks or keeps God’s law. If we hate a brother, then we might as well have committed murder (sin). If we lust, we might as well have committed adultery (sin). Thus, not only is the written code to be obeyed, but the spirit, or premise, behind the law is to be obeyed as well. Jesus taught us that it is just not our actions that break God’s law, but our heart does as well.

In fact, it is from the heart, soul, and mind that drives all of our behavior. This is not a new teaching

because this is what the Old Testament clearly teaches. However, in the first century, leadership had completely lost the purpose of God's law in their doctrine and teachings. Yeshua was simply re-teaching them and bringing them back to the basics.

Now, is it not clear why Scripture commands us to love God (keep His commandments) with all of our heart, soul, and mind? It is the inward heart that matters to God and is all that has mattered since the beginning, because whatever we believe inwardly, with all of our heart, all of our soul, and with all of our mind, is what we will express outwardly.

But He wants a new heart that is for His commandments, not against them (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:33). So, not only do we want to understand and practice the Law as it is written, but we also want to understand the premise or spirit behind the law in our heart, soul and mind, and thus, practice that understanding outwardly in our lives.

This is precisely why obedience is evidence of our faith and trust in God and in His Word.

The reverse is also true. Disobedience is evidence of our lack of faith and trust in God. Asking ourselves the question, "Do we want to avoid sin or not?" is the same as asking ourselves, "Do we want to be obedient to God's Law or not?"

When we habitually and continuously sin by not being obedient, then we enter the state of being rebellious. This is what Scripture teaches will happen to us if we practice such acts of disobedience:

Hebrews 10:26-31

²⁶If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

5. Obedience to His law makes us His peculiar people.

Exodus 19:5

"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:"

Deuteronomy 26:18

"Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,"

Paul also stated that obedience is associated with being the Lord's peculiar people.

Titus 2:14

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Peter also wrote that not being disobedient and being in the light (walking in the law) is what makes us the Lord's peculiar people.

1 Peter 2:8-9

⁸And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. ⁹But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:

The world finds obeying God strange and peculiar. We are called to follow God's ways, not the world's ways.

6. Obedience is righteousness. All Scripture is for instruction in righteousness, even the commandments that some teach have been supposedly abolished. If it is in Scripture, then according to His Word anything Scripture commands is instructions for righteousness for us no matter what men might tell us in their invented doctrines.

That certainly destroys most mainstream theological paradigms, but Truth is often not what is common. Just ask Noah. Just ask ancient Israel. Just ask the Pharisees, the leaders, and teachers of the day. Just ask end times prophecy.

Shame on us for being so arrogant to believe we could not make the same mistake in our fleshly bias and pride. In reality, it happens to be the cyclical pattern in the Bible with God's people.

2 Timothy 3:16

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

John stated that whoever does righteousness is righteous.

1 John 3:7

"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."

John also taught that if we decide not to do righteousness, then not only are we not of God, but we do not love others as well.

1 John 3:10

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother."

In fact, Peter states that it is better to not have known the way of righteousness than to turn from it after we understand it. On the day of judgment for believers, we will be judged more harshly by what we should have known through the reading of His Word and also by what we taught others.

2 Peter 2:21

"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Unrighteousness is sin.

1 John 5:17

“All unrighteousness is sin.”

Romans 14:23

“To know to do right and not do it is sin.”

And, as defined earlier, sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Thus, unrighteousness is breaking God’s law, and righteousness is obviously obedience to God’s law. However, our own righteousness, by keeping God’s law, will never be righteousness enough to save us. It takes the righteousness that we receive in faith in Christ, who was the perfect righteousness on our behalf, because we all fall short. That is the righteousness we need first.

Philippians 3:9

“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”

The whole letter to the Galatians teaches us that we cannot be saved by our keeping of God’s law. Complete righteousness cannot come from our own obedience. We have all failed and can do nothing to redeem ourselves.

Galatians 3:21

“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.”

Paul teaches us that through God’s grace we receive perfect righteousness because of Christ’s finished work on the cross. Our complete righteousness comes from the work on the cross by grace through faith.

Galatians 2:21

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead (was slain) in vain.”

But Paul also taught that there is righteousness that comes from obeying God’s law. This seems almost contrary to what he just taught in the previous Scripture.

Romans 10:5

“For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.”

Romans 10:4

“For Christ is the end (goal) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Romans 6:18

“Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.”

Romans 6:16

“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves

whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness.?”

So, we are to practice and do righteousness as obedience to the law (do not sin), but Christ is also our righteousness.

How does this work, exactly? Why was Paul teaching on what seems to be two types of valid righteousness?

Just like the previous Scripture, John stated, we are to not sin (righteousness according to God’s law), but when we fail, the righteousness of Jesus Christ advocates for us to the Father.

1 John 2:1

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteousness:”

Thus, we are to strive to practice and do righteousness (obedience to God’s law), but when we fail, we are covered by grace in our faith. This is exactly what Paul taught us about God’s law in Romans 3:31.

Romans 3:31

“Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

Just because Christ covers all of our sin (unrighteousness) in grace, it does not mean that we can sin (be unrighteousness). We want to continuously strive to be obedient, and God’s grace picks up where we fail. We do not sin just so “grace abounds.” We are to avoid sin and live the righteous life, as defined by God’s law.

7. Obedience is to be our delight. We have learned that obedience is the act of loving God, avoiding sin, evidencing our faith, and is our whole purpose in life. How, then, should we feel about being obedient?

It sounds like a strange question, but the answer is simple. We are to delight in His law. Anyone who complains about God’s law or speaks about it in the negative is certainly failing to realize a Biblical world view. In fact, anyone who claims God’s law is bondage, a burden, etc., is holding to a worldly perspective. That would be the same perspective as Satan himself and, sadly, that is where that perspective comes from. Satan calls God’s ways bondage and the world’s ways freedom. God calls His law freedom and the world’s ways (man’s ways) bondage.

Examine the Scriptures already provided and you will find that to be true. Now, keep that in mind the next time you hear someone calling God’s Sabbath bondage and realize whose side they are speaking for in that moment.

Psalms 1:2

“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

Psalms 119:35

“Make me to go in the path of Your commandments; for in them do I delight.”

Proverbs 29:18

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.”

We are to find happiness in our obedience. Paul also found his delight in being obedient to God's law.

Romans 7:22

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”

Even if we are persecuted because of our righteousness, we are to still be happy.

1 Peter 3:14

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

Amazing, isn't it? The way that some teach about God's law you would think that God's law is a horrible construct. Now we can see that that is not Biblical at all, but just a result of what is in their heart.

The irony is that the whole point of the New Covenant is for the Law to be written on our heart; that we will want to be obedient, instead of disobedient.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

³¹Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

8. Obedience leads to blessings and reward. Obedience does not grant us salvation, but is what we do once we have faith, as evidence of our faith.

God's law blesses us when we obey it and curses us when we disobey it. Christ removed the curse (second death) of the law on the cross for all those who have faith, leaving only the blessings in our obedience to God's law. This is not to say that sinning cannot still have negative effects in this life, but we are at least saved from the second death (the curse) in our faith.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

²⁶Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; ²⁷A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: ²⁸And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.

It is interesting to note that God considers that any time we disobey His commandments, it is just the same as going after other gods. This is because if we are not listening and doing His instruction, then we are doing whatever we please or someone else's instructions.

As a side note, this is why Jesus was orally tested by teachers of the law several times. According to Deuteronomy 13 and 18, if a prophet or teacher taught anything other than the commandments that were written by Moses, then they were considered a false prophet and leading God's people after other gods. Both Jesus and Paul were tested in this way several times in the Scripture, and they always passed the

test.

This is just another reason why it is absolutely certain that Jesus and Paul taught and practiced nothing that was against God's law, as written by Moses.

Some do actually teach that observing God's law is a curse. They have it backwards. Obeying God's commandments is a blessing; it is the disobedience to them that is a curse. Here is a sample of verses that teach obedience is actually a blessing, and who wouldn't want blessings?

Psalm 112:1

"Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments."

Psalm 191:1-2

¹Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD! ²Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!

Psalm 128:1

"Blessed is every one that fears the LORD; that walks in His ways."

Proverbs 8:32

"Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways."

Isaiah 56:2

"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

For those who mistakenly distinguish a difference between Old and New Testament (as if the Old Testament is not Scripture), here is a sample of verses in the New Testament stating the exact same thing.

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Matthew 5:10

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Luke 11:28

"But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

Yeshua was referring to the WHOLE Word of God, that includes Leviticus 11 and Leviticus 23.

James 1:25

"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

1 Peter 3:14

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of

their threats, nor be troubled.”

Revelation 22:14

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

In the end, all believers will be judged on how well they understood and practiced God’s Word. Obedience is rewarded when He returns, and we will either be least or greatest in the kingdom as a result.

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

If we teach that any of God’s law has been abolished and we practice as such then we will be least in the kingdom of heaven, at best. It is only those who teach all of God’s commandments and practice them that will be great in the kingdom of heaven. If you teach that God has abolished His Sabbath, for example, (and perhaps really believe that God would abolish the “eternal sign of His covenant”) it does not matter who you are or what else you did, you will still be saved but be least in the kingdom of heaven for all eternity. Your eternal rewards are compromised.

Matthew 5:17-19

¹⁷Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I do not come to destroy, but to fulfill (with meaning). ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (law and prophets) be fulfilled. ¹⁹Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

We will receive reward for our works on the day of judgment (His return). For some, there will be so little works that they will be saved, but basically have no eternal reward.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

¹³For every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

All of our works are judged, whether it be good or bad, and are all factored into the formula, resulting in our eternal rewards.

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Again, everyone will be judged.

Romans 14:10-11

¹⁰But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we

shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹For it is written: “As I live,” says the LORD, “Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

At this judgment, we will give an account of everything we did in our life to our Lord.

Romans 14:12

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Those who strived to practice righteousness, like Paul, will receive the crown of righteousness.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

So, this is not the judgment of salvation, or the Great White Throne judgement.

Summary of Obedience in Scripture:

1. Obedience is our purpose.
2. Obedience is the evidence of our faith.
3. Obedience is loving God and loving others.
4. Obedience is the same as not sinning.
5. Obedience to His law makes us His peculiar people.
6. Obedience is to be our delight.
7. Obedience is righteousness.
8. Obedience leads to blessings and eternal rewards.

Disobedience is the opposite of all those things.

It was said that years ago, a man was about to push a wheelbarrow across a tightrope over Niagara Falls. He asked the crowd how many believed he could make it. Many held up their hands. Then he asked them how many had faith enough to ride in the wheelbarrow! No, you do not need to cross Niagara Falls in a wheelbarrow to please God, but you do need the kind of faith that leads you to act in obedience to His commandments.

In closing, here are some additional verses to consider:

Proverbs 10:8

“The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.”

1 Peter 4:17

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

Revelation 22:14

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Acts 5:29

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, ‘[We ought to obey God rather than men.](#)’”

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.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

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