

By

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The many translations of the Bible into English have one common problem: they use words to explain concepts that confuse understanding more than assist it. One such problem is the words translated “grace.”

To demonstrate this problem let’s examine two verses often used to “prove” that keeping the Sabbath is not required for the New Covenant Christian. The first one is found in Eph 2:8-9 “For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

This verse is used to say that the keeping of God’s Sabbath Day is a “work” which is not required for this alleged salvation under discussion. But is that what is being said?

Another verse where this confusing term of “grace” is used is Rom 3:21-24 where we read, “But now a righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ, toward all and upon all those who believe. For there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” The idea that is promoted from this verse is that grace justifies one so that righteousness is “apart from the law.”

But what is the truth? Is God really telling us we don’t need to obey His Commandments any more once we have received grace?

The writer at JCBlog.net on the internet inadvertently shows us exactly the type of confusion caused by this usage of the word grace: “*Everyone is saved the very same way, by putting our trust in Jesus’ gift of grace.*” The author goes on to say, “*Grace is unmerited, un-*

earned favor and kindness towards us on behalf of Jesus.” And, again: “*Everyone is saved the very same way, by putting our trust in Jesus’ gift of grace. Paul said it is not by works so that no one can brag about it.*” But, does what the writer writes line up with scripture as a whole? To understand this, we need to understand how “grace” is used throughout the scriptures—not in just a few verses taken out of context.

When we appeal to the Old Testament scriptures, we find something very hard to explain—if the writer at JCBlog is right about grace being Jesus’ gift. We notice first in Gen. 6:8 that Noah found grace in God’s eyes. We all know that this is thousands of years before Jesus walked the earth as a man.

In Gen. 19:18-19 we find Lot acknowledging his finding grace in God’s sight. At Ezra 9:7-8 we find that Ezra acknowledges that the remnant of Israel who returned to Jerusalem had been shown grace by God. Moses, in Exo. 33:12-13 directly asks the LORD whether he had found grace in His sight. In verse 17 the LORD answers that Moses had indeed found grace in His sight. David recognized that YHVH granted grace (Ps 84:11).

One could try to make the case that these examples of grace were from the LORD to His people in an attempt to shore up the interpretation of “grace” used to eschew the keeping of the Sabbath Days as “works.”

However, let us not stop there. In Gen. 33:9-10 we find Jacob asking Esau whether he had found grace in Esau’s eyes. This is a serious problem for the common understanding of grace. Here we find one brother asking another for grace. At this point, perhaps we ought to look

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at the underlying word interpreted as "grace."

When we read of the interaction between YHWH and men, we find the Hebrew word "chen" interpreted as "grace." That word should actually be translated "graciousness," not grace. One might believe that they are the same, and to one who grasps older English it might be. But in today's understanding of the terms, grace is nebulous while graciousness is a concept easily grasped. Where we see the word "grace" used we would get a better understanding of the writer's intent by changing the word to graciousness.

With that in mind, we can examine other scriptures containing the word "grace." In Gen. 39:3-4 we find that Joseph finds grace in the eyes of the master who owned him. This master was an Egyptian, not even an Israelite, and yet he had grace toward Joseph.

When David had fled from Saul to Gath, he found grace in the eyes of Achish (1 Sa 27:4-5). Ruth, after having been granted special privileges by Boaz, questioned him as to why she had found grace in his eyes (Rth 2:8-10).

Even the non-Israelite King Ahasuerus was able to grant grace and favor to Esther (Est. 2:16-17). Solomon wrote in Pro 3:19-22 that wisdom and understanding were "grace to the neck." Moreover, he wrote that the one who loves pureness of heart had grace on his lips.

In an interesting prophecy found in Zec 12:8-10, we find that God will pour out on the House of David the spirit of grace, not grace itself. No matter how you look at the word grace, it is not, as is supposed by those who deny the requirement to obey God by keeping His Sabbaths holy, something from Jesus granting license to disobey.

But, some might say, grace in the New Covenant is

something different. However, when we appeal to the Greek word we find a reassuring comfort in the term. The Greek word translated "grace" is "charis." This word means "graciousness," also!

When we go back to the verses cited by the JCBlog writer, and use a word more easily understood, we find the verses take on a different connotation for us. For instance, Eph 2:8-9 becomes the following, "For by graciousness (of God) we are saved through faith, and that (the faith) is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Now it is easy to see that faith, not grace, is the gift of God.

The question is this, "If 'grace' is the unmerited pardon, or the gift of Jesus, then why did Jesus need grace as is clearly stated in Luke 2?"

When we look at Rom 3:23-24 we now read the following, "... for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely, by (or because of) His graciousness, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." Now we can easily see that what justifies us freely is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not some nebulous concept of grace.

Another question arises because of yet another verse with our mystical word grace. It is found in Luke 2:40 where we read, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was on Him." The question is this, "If 'grace' is the unmerited pardon, or the gift of Jesus, then why did Jesus need grace as is clearly stated in Luke 2?" The answer, of course, is that the word means graciousness as we have been discussing. Restated using the proper word, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the graciousness of God was on Him." That verse makes a lot more sense, now, doesn't it?

In Act 15:11 we read, "But we believe that through the

grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, according to which manner they also believed." This verse seems to indicate that the "grace" saves us as some want us to believe. But, other verses indicate that we shall be saved by Jesus' life (Rom 5:10). So, which is it? The truth is easily grasped when we substitute the correct word. We find this, instead, "But we believe that, through the graciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, ..." Now, combined with other verses of scripture that verse makes much more sense.

In Rom 4:3-5 we read, "For what does the Scripture say?

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. But to him working, the reward is not reckoned according to graciousness, but according to debt. But to him not working, but believing on Him justifying the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." One of the things we know about Abraham is that he was obedient. He had works. It was because of those works that he was allowed to enter into a covenant with the LORD whereby he would be the father of an uncountable multitude.

That was the reward for his obedience, whereas his faith in the Word of the LORD made him righteous. But, again, all of this was the result, not of some nebulous idea of grace envisioned by some, but of the graciousness of God. Why? Because, let's face it, Abraham was a sinner just like the rest of us, and as He is to us, He was gracious to Abraham.

We could go on indefinitely in the same manner, but I believe that I have made my point. Anyone doing an exhaustive study of the idea of grace can't help but notice the many contradictions in the use of the term as promoted by "Christianity" today. But, anyone using the actual meaning of the word, graciousness, can begin to see that there is far less contradiction and confusion

about that word and can begin to meld the statements of the various writers into a cohesive, plainly understood, set of statements which allow us to see that which every one of the first century apostles saw—that God, or Yah, or Yahweh, or Jehovah, or however you wish to say His name, is indeed a gracious God and always has been.

We can see what Noah, Abraham, Israel, Joseph, Ezra and many others of the Old Testament times saw: a gracious God, full of mercy and willing to forgive. We can begin to see that the Fruits of the Spirit found in Gal 5:22 can be summed up in that one word—graciousness.

We serve a gracious God, patient and loving, willing and wanting to forgive and to allow us repentance and the

washing of the blood of the Lamb, His Son, and our Savior and King. Understanding the extent of His graciousness is possible when we are not distracted by archaic translations of terms and the willful ignoring of scriptures that don't make sense using the actual words.

While we have come to understand these things, our future brethren remain deceived. Let us pray for the day when the eyes of all will be opened to the Truth of God and His graciousness.

I don't mean to single out the writer of

JCBlog.net as being any more in error than anyone else. That writer is probably sincere in his beliefs. But, as we all know, we can be sincerely wrong. This writer prays for the day when all will be made clear and that the graciousness of God which surpasses all understanding is made known to all men.

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