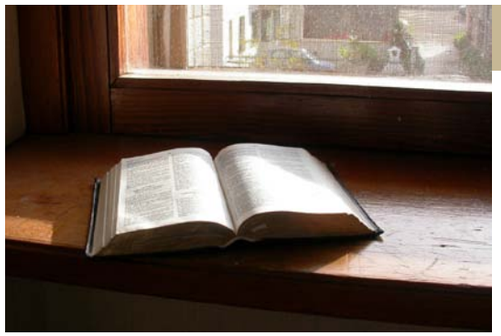


This is very similar to a statement Paul makes in his letter to the Colossians. After telling them no one can judge them any longer concerning elements of the Old Law, he speaks of these as **"a shadow of things to come; but the body** [Gr. *soma*] **is of Christ"** (Col. 2:17, KJV). Jesus is the body that casts the shadow. All Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow of what He would accomplish. The grace of God that sent Jesus to die offers forgiveness of sins to the righteous in the Old Testament just as it does to Christians in the New Testament. God's grace has been given to His people all along.

a Hebrew variant or a paraphrase taking preparation of the ears as a part of the body standing for the whole. Unfortunately, the Dead Sea Scroll that would have contained this passage (11QPsa[d], frag. 6) is missing all of this Psalm after the first word.

Conclusion

We have seen that grace has always characterized God's relationship with His people. How then are we to understand texts such as the one with which we began—**"grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"** (John 1:17)? We might note that this is not the only place we see such contrasts. Paul told the Romans **"you are not under law but under grace"** (Rom. 6:14-15). Paul does not mean that in Christ there is no law that governs behavior. He told the Corinthians no one is **"without law toward God, but under law toward Christ"** (1 Cor. 9:21). Paul and John contrast *law* and *grace* to emphasize the distinctive nature of the Mosaic system of faith, and the gospel system of faith. Both involved law, both involved faith, and both were dependent upon the grace of God. Yet, in the sacrifice of Jesus as the ultimate atonement for our sins God's grace was poured out as it had never been. This was part of what was promised in connection with the coming of the Messiah—a time when God would pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem **"the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn"** (Zech. 12:10). Jesus was the Divine one whom **"they pierced,"** He was the **"firstborn"** who was God's **"only Son."** Only those who look to Christ, in obedience and faith can know a measure of grace and mercy unknown to the world before the coming of Jesus.

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Services
Sunday: 9:00 AM
9:30 AM
10:30 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

Was There Grace in the Old Testament?

By Kyle Pope

The Holy Spirit led the apostle John to write, **"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"** (John 1:17, NKJV). Through the centuries this beautiful contrast between the Old Covenant and the gospel has led some to imagine that God's grace played no part in His relationship to man under Mosaic Law. John Calvin, for example, in commenting on this verse claimed of *grace* and *truth* "the law had neither the one nor the other" (*Commentary on John* 1:17).[1] Was grace only introduced with the proclamation of the gospel? Was there no grace extended by God prior to Christ?

Did God Show Grace in the Old Testament?

The simple answer is yes, God clearly extended grace to His people in the Old Testament. **"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD"** (Gen. 6:8) and was spared from the flood. Jacob declared **"God has dealt graciously with me"** (Gen. 33:11). God tells Jeremiah that Israel **"found grace in the wilderness"** (Jer. 31:2). The blessing Mosaic priests were to offer over the people proclaimed, **"The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you"** (Num. 6:25). During the days of Jehoahaz, **"the LORD was gracious"** unto Israel (2 Kings 13:23) protecting her from

[1] This is the literal translation of Calvin's French wording ("la Loy n'a eu ne l'un ne l'autre"). Calvin's words may sound more harsh than he actually believed. He explains in the context his belief that the *grace* and *truth* that were brought by Christ gave life to a lifeless system of law without Christ. Even so, his words illustrate the concept many have held regarding grace under the Old Covenant.

utter destruction. Jonah resisted preaching to Nineveh knowing that God was **"a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness"** (Jon. 4:2). In sparing a remnant after the exile, Ezra recognized **"grace has been shown from the LORD our God"** (Ezra 9:8). The wise man proclaimed that God **"gives grace to the humble"** (Prov. 3:34), a text that both Peter and James quote in the New Testament (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). The psalmist declared, **"The LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly"** (Psa. 84:11, NASB). In the face of Israel's rebellion, **"the LORD was gracious"** to the people **"because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"** (2 Kings 13:23, NKJV). There can be no question that Old Testament covenants were covenants of grace.

The Tutor and Shadow

Far from being a concept absent from the Old Testament it is because of what we learn about grace under the Old Law that its significance may be understood in Christ. Paul taught the Galatians **"the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ"** (Gal. 3:24). The Hebrew writer described it as **"a shadow of the good things to come"** (Heb. 10:1). The Law taught the responsibility of obedience. The Law commanded **"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD"** (Lev. 18:5). All too often, however, Israel failed to meet this responsibility leading this principle to become a point of emphasis throughout the Old Testament period. To a rebellious people during the exile, for example, the Lord repeated these words through the prophet Ezekiel reminding them of His judgments "which, if a man does, he shall live by them" (Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21). During the restoration following the exile, Nehemiah called upon the people to keep the Lord's judgments, repeating the same words**—"which, if a man does, he shall live by them"** (Neh. 9:29). Paul calls this principle **"the righteousness which is of the law,"** quoting these same words, **"The man who does those things shall live by them"** (Rom. 10:5). God never revoked this responsibility under Moses or under Christ. Concerning the two greatest commandments, Jesus told a teacher of the Law **"do this and you will live"** (Luke 10:28).

In spite of the emphasis on this principle, man's repeated failures to fulfill this **"righteousness which is of the law"** demonstrated (by Israel's own history) mankind's need for **"a gracious and m**erciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness" (Jon. 4:2). The Law revealed man's need for mercy. Its own sacrificial system showed than man could not remove his own sin when he failed



to **"do"** the things of the law. Since the beginning of man's history it has always been that **"blood that makes atonement for the soul"** (Lev. 17:11). Christians have often made it sound as if there was no forgiveness that was granted in the offering of animal sacrifices. That is not so! We can see this in the many times we find the phrase **"shall be forgiven"** in connection with various offerings under Mosaic Law (e.g. Lev. 4:20; 4:26; 4:30; 4:35; 5:10; 5:13; 5:16; 5:18; 6:7; 19:22; Num. 15:26; 15:28). When the Israelites made the proscribed sacrifices had they merited their forgiveness? No! Nothing in their action or in the intrinsic value of animal sacrifices earned forgiveness. In obedience to Mosaic Law the Israelites accepted the terms under which God promised to grant forgiveness. This very provision was *God's grace*. We see this in a powerful command concerning honesty. The Lord commanded, **"Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked"** (Exod. 23:7). In specifying whom He would *not* **"justify"** the Lord made the clear inference that He is the one who holds the power *to justify!* When Paul told the Romans, **"It is God who justifies"** (Rom. 8:33b), he was not stating something that was purely a New Covenant principle. Whenever man has received forgiveness from God it has been by an act of God's grace.

Old Testament Grace Anticipated Christ

If animal sacrifices did not possess any intrinsic value that merited forgiveness why were they offered? The New Testament reveals to us that they brought forgiveness looking forward to the sacrifice of Christ. The Hebrew writer tells us that Christ **"by means of death"** brought **"redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant"** (Heb. 9:15). Paul told the Romans that Christ offers **"propitiation by His blood"** because **"in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed"** (Rom. 3:25). Christ's sacrifice *did* possess the intrinsic value necessary to merit forgiveness. Old Testament sacrifices brought forgiveness, but only because they prefigured what Christ's sacrifice would actually provide. Let's notice how the Hebrew writer explains this after referring to the Law as a **"shadow of the good things to come"** (Heb. 10:1a). When we see a shadow of a person on the ground, we can infer that it was cast by the body of the man or woman who caused the shadow. The Hebrew writer says first that the offerings that constituted this **"shadow"** could not make those who offered them **"perfect"** (Heb. 10:1c). We have noted above, this doesn't mean they didn't receive forgiveness, but it did not make them *perfect* or *complete*, or else they would not need to be offered **"continually year by year"** (Heb. 10:1b). Instead, these offerings served as a **"reminder of sins"** (Heb. 10:3), because the **"blood of bulls and goats"** could not **"take away sins"** (Heb. 10:4). What could take away sins? The Hebrew writer quotes from the Greek Old Testament of Psalm 40:6 to answer this**—"sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body** [Gr. *soma*] **You have prepared for Me"** (Heb. 10:5b).[2]

[2] The Hebrew text of Psalm 40:6 reads **"my ears you have opened"** (NKJV), but the text of the Greek Old Testament done before the time of Christ, quoted by the Hebrew writer, and preserved in the Sinai, Vatican, and Alexandrian manuscripts all read **"a body you have prepared for Me."** This is likely either evidence of