

Grace Is Not Your Supernatural Deodorant—Understanding Jesus' Atonement

As a Jewish believer in Yeshua as Messiah, I am aware that we are fast approaching the Fall Holy Days of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. We are entering into the time of preparation during the 40 days preceding Rosh HaShanah that begins with the month of Elul.

Each year at this time, I look back at my life as a believer and rejoice in the overwhelming love that G-D showed to me when He revealed Yeshua as my Messiah. This year, I was thinking about the Book of Hebrews because it is so significant to the season as it discusses the High Priest and the Day of Atonement and explains how Yeshua became our High Priest, a topic I covered in last week's blog.

When I became a believer, one of the first books of the New Testament I read was the book of Hebrews. After all, it was written to people just like me: Jewish believers. The more I read, the more meaningful the book became, and the more foundational for understanding what Yeshua did for me and all of those who accept that He is the Messiah. It helped me to understand the atonement provided by our High Priest once and for all time.

With atonement in mind, I was examining Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1:

Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Of course, we know that Hebrews 11 is the heroes of the faith chapter and the reason this verse starts with the recognition of the witnesses surrounding us. But, the second part of the verse is what drew my attention as we are instructed to “lay aside very weight and the sin that so easily entangles us.” The writer of Hebrews has completed chapter 6-10, which explains Yeshua as our High Priest, and goes on to remind us of heroes of the Bible who acted by faith. Then he begins this chapter by telling us that because of the example of those who demonstrated faith, we should get rid of sin that entangles us.

The writer of Hebrews, unlike so many teachers today, is not telling us that it is impossible not to sin. He isn't telling us that because of Yeshua's atonement and offering, we now have salvation and could continue sinning without concern. He boldly says to those he was writing to that they had an obligation to get rid of the weight and entangling sins in their lives.

Today, too many people view grace like a supernatural deodorant that is applied to cover the stench of sin in our lives, when the Scriptures actually provide the example of Paul, who, in Acts 22:13-16, shares his experience of coming to faith in Yeshua, as follows:

came and stood by me, and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that moment I looked up at him.

“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Just One and to hear His voice, for you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise, be baptized and wash away your sins, and call on the name of the Lord.’

Notice as I did, if you will, the connection provided by the words “for you will be His witness” followed by “wash away

your sins.” The same pattern we see in Hebrews 12. I know that in our culture today, preaching that we can overcome sin is a much rarer thing than it was in Paul’s day. However, I still believe that we are to follow the instruction to get rid of weights and entangling sins in our lives. Let’s not forget that one of our purposes as believers is to be an example or a witness of G-D’s forgiveness and His delivering power that sets us from sin, not free to sin. {eo}

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