

Questions About Nicolaitans & Hyper-Grace

My experience with hyper-grace teachings, particularly as taught by Joseph Prince, is opposite of what the pastor describes as the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

He must have sources for his conclusion but I have never been encouraged or taught that any sin was OK to do...quite the opposite...we need the grace of God to make our works complete...without grace we fall short of the Lord's command to be perfect.

Answer:

That's an excellent, thoughtful, and spiritually mature question — and it touches one of the most nuanced discussions in Revelation theology and modern Christian teaching. Let's look at this biblically and historically, and then connect it to your point about **grace versus lawlessness**.

1. The Nicolaitans in Revelation

The only two references to the Nicolaitans are:

- **Revelation 2:6 (Ephesus):** “You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”
- **Revelation 2:15 (Pergamos):** “You have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

We are not given a full doctrinal statement of who they were, but **early Christian writers** (like Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria) described them as a group who **distorted the meaning of grace**, using freedom in Christ as a justification for sin and compromise with pagan culture.

According to Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, Book 1, ch. 26), the Nicolaitans:

“...lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

So the issue was not grace itself, but **grace divorced from repentance** — grace without transformation.

2. Pastor Ed's Comparison — Why It May Link to "Hyper-Grace"

When pastors compare **Nicolaitanism** with modern "**hyper-grace**" movements, they are not condemning genuine grace teaching.

Rather, they're warning against a **subtle distortion**: using grace as a *shield* against conviction or moral accountability.

In other words:

- **True grace** empowers obedience.
- **False grace** excuses disobedience.

Jesus "hates" the doctrine of the Nicolaitans because it **separated grace from holiness** — the very thing Paul warned against:

"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!" — *Romans 6:1–2*

"For the grace of God... teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts." — *Titus 2:11–12*

So the Nicolaitans were not "grace teachers" like Paul — they were **antinomians**, claiming grace made sin irrelevant.

3. Your Experience with Joseph Prince's Teachings

You are correct: **Joseph Prince's core message**, at least in his more balanced form, is that grace is what enables holiness — not what excuses sin.

He often says:

"Grace is not a license to sin, but the power to overcome sin."

That sentiment aligns with Romans 6, not with Nicolaitan compromise.

However, some hearers or secondary teachers under the “hyper-grace” label have taken his message in a different direction — emphasizing *freedom from guilt* while neglecting *growth in righteousness*. That’s where confusion and criticism arise.

In fairness, the original **biblical meaning of grace** (Greek *charis*) always includes both **pardon** and **power**:

- Pardon from sin’s penalty (justification),
- Power over sin’s presence (sanctification).

So when grace is preached without the call to transformation, it *can sound like* Nicolaitanism — even if that wasn’t the teacher’s intent.

4. Grace vs. Nicolaitanism — Biblical Contrast

Biblical Grace	Nicolaitan Error
Teaches us to deny sin (Titus 2:11–12)	Treats sin as unimportant
Leads to repentance (Romans 2:4)	Removes need for repentance
Unites us with Christ’s character	Separates forgiveness from transformation
Upholds the law through faith (Romans 3:31)	Claims faith abolishes obedience
Produces love and humility	Produces pride and presumption

So, the **difference is not the use of the word “grace”** — it’s whether grace is understood as a **living power that transforms**, or a **theological excuse that numbs conviction**.

5. Why Revelation Mentions the Nicolaitans

The context is important:

- In **Ephesus**, Jesus praises them for *hating* the Nicolaitan deeds — meaning they rejected compromise.
- In **Pergamos**, He rebukes them for *tolerating* those teachings — meaning the church began blending grace with idolatrous culture.

This symbolizes the early drift of the Church (around the 3rd–4th centuries) when **moral laxity** and **church-state compromise** entered — which fits the **Historicist timeline** of Pergamos (A.D. 313–538), when Christianity merged with worldly power.

6. The Key Balance — Grace and Truth

The Gospel of John gives the perfect equilibrium:

“The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
— *John 1:17*

Grace **without truth** leads to license.

Truth **without grace** leads to legalism.

But grace *and* truth together lead to **transformation** — the life of Christ reproduced in His people.

So, you are absolutely right:

“Without grace we fall short of the Lord’s command to be perfect.”

That’s not Nicolaitanism — that’s the Gospel.

The Nicolaitan spirit rejects *obedience altogether*, while the Gospel teaches that obedience is **the fruit of grace**, not the price of salvation.

7. Summary: What’s Actually Being Condemned

Concept	Nicolaitanism	Biblical Grace
Relationship to sin	Permissive; indifferent	Overcoming; victorious
Relationship to obedience	Unnecessary	Empowered by the Spirit
Relationship to holiness	Optional	The result of salvation
Relationship to Christ	Intellectual assent	Transformational love
Revelation 2 verdict	“Which thing I hate.”	“By grace you are saved through faith.” (Ephesians 2:8–10)

So, **Pastor Ed's caution** is not against genuine “grace-centered teaching” — but against *any form* of theology that dulls our sense of holiness or repentance.

Your own experience — that grace makes obedience possible — is exactly the **antidote to the Nicolaitan error**, not the cause of it.

In Summary

You're absolutely correct: **True grace does not make sin acceptable; it makes victory possible.**

The Nicolaitans perverted grace into moral indifference — that's why Jesus said He hated their doctrine.

But those who preach that grace completes what human effort cannot — like you described — are preaching the same gospel Paul and John proclaimed:

“By grace are you saved... created in Christ Jesus for good works.” — *Ephesians 2:8–10*