



Key Verses: Galatians 1:11-12  
“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

## LESSON 11

# GRACE DOCTRINE

## AND ITS SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

### Part 1

Lesson Theme: Paul’s Gospel is special because it applies directly to us today.

### ENGAGE

Various churches have different ideas of what the Gospel is, and what is needed to be saved. They can’t all be right; the differences are too great. How can we know that what we teach is right?

### ENLIGHTEN

#### Introduction

Advertising agencies have learned that the most effective way to sell a product is to come up with a catchy slogan that will stick in people’s minds. One advertisement said, “Distinctively Different” and “Different is Good.” They did not mean that everything about their product was different, but that the differences were significant enough for this product to be superior to any of the others. In the following three lessons, we will see from Holy Scripture how Paul’s message was distinctively different (clearly seen to be different) from what came before, and that this difference is especially important for everyone alive today.

#### Paul’s Apostleship and Message

For the young people who have been learning from these lessons in the “Growing Up in Grace” curriculum, it has been often pointed out that the Grace Message differs greatly in many respects from what, for a better term, might be called, “traditional Christianity.” However, is there one unifying truth that we can point to that will help us understand why it is different, and why so many Christians are confused as to what God is doing in the world today? Indeed there is! It is Paul’s unique apostleship and message. Unique means it is one-of-a-kind. It is unique in the sense that he did not receive it from any human on earth, but rather from the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12).

Of course, others in the Bible received messages from God, but these people were concerned primarily with the nation of Israel. Paul is special in that he is the Apostle of the Gentiles and his teaching, instructions, and promises deal specifically with us today in the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3:2). Paul spent the greater part of two chapters in the book of Galatians explaining that his apostleship and message were not a part of the original Twelve Apostles' (Gal. 1:1-2:12). When this distinction is recognized, it explains why there are so many different teachings among the churches, and how we can know for sure that we are saved and in God's will. In this lesson, we will be learning about the preaching of the Cross, salvation without works, and grace reigning.

### The Preaching of the Cross

God desires to have a relationship with those whom He has created. However, man has erected a wall of sin in his heart that separates him from his Creator. Since no man could fix this problem, God stepped forward with a plan that both satisfied His justice and provided man with a way back to Himself. That the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for man's sins is generally acknowledged by most churches that call themselves "Christian." What isn't generally recognized is that Paul was the first to preach this fact as good news.

After Christ's ascension into Heaven, Peter and the other Apostles preached His Crucifixion and Resurrection as *historical facts*. Still, for them it was not good news, as Peter pointed the finger of accusation at them and *blamed* them for Christ's death, warning them that He will return and judge His people (Acts 2:22-23, 36, 3:12-15, 20-23). Many people *assume* that the people in the Old Testament must have known that Jesus Christ would someday die for them as the final sin offering. If they did, they knew more than the Twelve Apostles who followed Christ for most of His ministry. As the time of His Crucifixion approached, only then did He begin to tell them of His coming Death and Resurrection. Even then, they did not understand what He was talking about for it says, **"And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken"** (Luke 18:34, emphasis added).

How could they have been preaching the Cross as Good News if they didn't even know that He was to die? On another occasion, Christ began to show to His Disciples how He must be killed and raised again the third day. You would think that the Disciples would have said something like, "Thank you Lord for loving me so much that you are going to die for me so that I can have eternal life." Instead, Peter began to rebuke him saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). The fact is that none of them knew at the time that He was

going to die, much less what that death would accomplish for our salvation. Not until Paul was converted and commissioned as the Apostle of the Gentiles does God reveal to him that in Jesus Christ, "... we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). The few Old Testament prophecies which tell of Christ's death were purposely written in veiled language where it was unclear who was being spoken of or the purpose of the death. We can now look back in hindsight with Paul's revelation of the Cross and rejoice that God had it planned all along.

If this is true, how were people saved before Paul? It was through another message called "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt. 4:23, 9:35). This Gospel centered in Christ's person (*who He is*, the Christ, the Son of God), (Matt. 16:16; John 20:31). Repentance and water baptism were also required for salvation at that time (Mark 1:4, 16:16; Acts 2:38). Of course, we also believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but that in itself does not save us. Paul's revelation of the Gospel of the Grace of God centered in *what He did* on the Cross. We must believe, "... on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:24-25).

Another special aspect of the Gospel of the Grace of God is that the merits of Christ's death transcend Jewish expectations and extend to all mankind. When the Lord Jesus gave the

Twelve Apostles the Lord's Supper, He said, "**For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for *many* for the remission [forgiveness] of sins**" (Matt. 26:28 and 20:28, emphasis, italics, and brackets added). Notice that it says His blood was shed for many, not all. That is in keeping with the Christ's statement, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). The time was not yet for the revelation that He died for all mankind. Paul was the first who wrote that "**Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time**" (1 Tim. 2:6, emphasis and italics added; see also 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Later the other New Testament writers wrote of this truth (1 John 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:18, 2:24, 3:18) but even then it was not until Paul had communicated to them that Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:2).

#### Discussion

#### **Why do you think God chose Paul to reveal these truths?**

(Thoughts: It was God's time, God's pleasure, to fool Satan, to continue revealing His purpose for mankind, and to show how He could change the persecutor of believers and make him a chosen vessel for Himself.)

#### **Salvation Without Works**

Yet another unique part of the Gospel of the Grace of God is the teaching that eternal life is received by faith alone, without works of any kind. Faith has always been the way to receive

God's salvation for people of all ages (Hebrews 11). However, before Paul, faith was accompanied by works as an expression of one's faith. For example, under the Gospel of the Kingdom, water baptism was required along with repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins, i.e., one's salvation (Mark 1:4, 16:16; Acts 2:38). Paul was the first one who insisted upon faith alone without works. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5, see also Romans 3:20-22, 24, 28; Gal. 3:11, 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). We do not have these kinds of statements outside Paul's letters.

Works that people did in the past and still try to do today include rituals such as: water baptism, circumcision, animal sacrifices, or joining the church. They also include moral living like: keeping the commandments, obeying the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, and generally living a good life. While it is admirable to live a good, moral life, it will never save you or give you a relationship with God. Paul said, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). The main thought is that if a person tries to attain a right standing before God by law-keeping, it frustrates (or does away with) God's free gift of grace. If it were possible for us to be saved on the basis of law-keeping, Christ's death would have been for nothing. The whole reason we cannot be saved by living a

good life is that we are sinners by nature, and by practice, and no one can do it in themselves. Romans 3:12 says: "... there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Anything that we attempt to do to attain God's favor is just a product of a fallen, sinful, nature and is therefore rejected by God. What we need first is regeneration by the Holy Spirit of God (Titus 3:5). Then we can offer our lives back to Him as we allow His Spirit to do His works through us (Eph. 2:10).

#### Discussion

#### **Is it possible to be so bad God will not save a person?**

(Thoughts: Paul was the chief of sinners and God saved him. There are no unforgivable sins today; all sins can be forgiven, God is willing to save all. He has done everything for our salvation; but we have to accept the free-gift of salvation by faith, it is our choice.)

#### **Grace Reigning**

We do not want you to think that the people before Paul were saved by works and now, we are saved by faith. No way! As mentioned before, salvation had always been by faith but was also accompanied by works as an expression of that faith. If God commanded them to bring a sacrifice or submit to water baptism, what would faith do? It would do as God commanded. Anything else would have been rebellion and unbelief.

Likewise, God's grace has always been present since the Fall of Adam. That is the only way

anyone in any age could have been saved. Genesis 6:8 says (emphasis and italics added), **“But Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the LORD.”** The Old Testament “grace” is from a Hebrew word that means “favor.” The next words tell us why Noah found this grace. “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” He wasn’t sinless or perfect but he loved God and wanted to please Him. Another passage from the New Testament tells us more, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7). Notice that although grace and faith were present, it was necessary for Noah to express his faith through works. In his case, he was moved by fear and prepared the Ark that saved him and his family. So suppose Noah had refused to build the Ark; he and his family would have been swept away in the Flood with all the other unbelievers.

Today we live in the Dispensation of the Grace of God, and this was made known to and through Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1-2). Even though there was grace in other dispensations, ours is the only one specifically called “the Dispensation of the Grace of God.” That means grace is now the overriding principle that governs all of God’s dealings with man. It extends beyond God’s chosen people Israel and reaches the entire world. Its free gift

restricts men to faith only. Paul described it as reigning on the Throne as King. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20-21). Being saved from the penalty of sin by God’s grace through faith brings all the credit and the glory back to God where it belongs. It also gives us peace of mind, knowing that Christ is the only Savior, and that we do not have to try to save ourselves through anything we do. Everything we have, or are, or will be, we owe to the grace of God!

**Additional Resources:**

*Things That Differ*, by C.R. Stam

*The Mystery*, by Joel Finck

*The Essential Book of Grace*, by Ken Lawson