

Grace Words: SALVATION

Christ Did It All!

by Steve Walker

ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF SALVATION

Last time we looked at SALVATION. First, we saw that we are not just a little lost or a little dead. Having been born sinners in Satan's world, we are completely lost, entirely hopeless, and spiritually dead in the sphere of sin, judged and condemned to Hell. Wow, if the story ended there things would be very dark indeed. But the second thing we saw was that just at that very moment, just when we were most hopeless and most powerless to do anything to help ourselves, while we were still God's enemies and when things were most dark and most dire, God did something.

God looked down on our sinful and hopeless condition, but instead of writing us off as a bad investment (which He would have been completely right to do) and leaving us to our deserved doom, He gave Himself for us, sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became a servant by becoming a man for the sole purpose of going to the cross to save us. This is how the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans 5:8-10:

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*...But God commends His love toward us. In that, while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us...when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son...For if, when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life...

There are many erroneous views of Christ's work on the cross. Some think He died simply to make up for what we

lacked. This can be looked at in a couple of different ways. Those who think we are mostly good and acceptable to God, suggest that Christ's death makes up for the little bit we fall short. They think we are, say, 90% saved and 10% lost, and that Christ went to the cross to make up our 10% shortfall.

Then there are those who think we are mostly bad. They suggest that Christ went to the cross for our really big sins, the really big sins we could not pay for on our own. They think Christ's death provides most of our salvation, leaving the small sins for us to deal with on our own through our good works, rituals, sacraments, etc... In other words, He brought us close to heaven's door so that we can do the last little bit on our own. In this view, Christ provided, say, 90% of our salvation on the cross, leaving 10% for us to do.

But, you see, the Bible says we are 100% lost, completely enslaved to sin and absolutely spiritually dead, having no strength of our own. Whether Christ left 10% or 90% for us to do, we would still be completely lost. The cure for our hopeless condition required infinitely more than all our resources put together could accomplish. Think about it. It is obvious that a physically dead person cannot give himself physical life. Everyone would agree with that! Isn't it even more obvious then that a spiritually dead person cannot give himself spiritual life? So then, why do all religions, most denominations and many theologians say otherwise?

Christ *did not* die to make up what we lacked. He *did not* die to get us most of the way there. He *did not* go to the cross to provide part of our salvation, leaving us to produce the rest. Christ *did not* just die for some of our sins or even most of our sins. He *did not* die to throw open the door of heaven, leaving it to us to somehow enter in by trying hard enough or running fast enough or fighting vigorously enough or being religious enough or participating in enough sacraments or suffering enough or anything else.

No, Scripture says He died for all of our sins! He took them all onto Himself at the cross where God the Father judged them all, every last one of them—the past ones, the present ones and the future ones; the large and small ones, the ones we

display in public and the ones we hide away in the closet, the nice ones and the nasty ones. There at the Cross, God the Son, paid the price in whole for the debt we owed but could never pay, and this is what solves the problem of our desperate and hopeless condition. He did it all!

CHRIST'S PART: THE CROSS

The Gospel of John, chapter 19:17-30, gives us an account of some things that happened when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. Let's follow along:

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew *Golgotha*: Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross... JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews...and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.

What a sight! Both Gentile and Jew coming together to join hands in sinful rebellion against their Creator and King by crucifying the only Perfect Man and Eternal God, the Lord Jesus. What a sight! Mankind finally united--not in good but in the evil and horror of the cross where all the tributaries of sin converged into a surging torrent that poured down upon Him.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother...After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Mat. 27 fills in the details, telling us that there were three hours of darkness, from noon to 3:00 p.m., and that it was

during those darkened hours, as Jesus Christ our substitute hung on the cross, that He cried out with a loud voice: **My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?** (Mat. 27:46). Luther said of this verse, "God forsaken of God. Who can understand it?"

When the Lord Jesus took our sins onto Himself at the cross (for He had no sin of His Own), God the Father looked down on God the Son, saw our sinless Substitute voluntarily bearing our sins, and then He did something that ought to strike terror in our souls--He turned away. The Father withdrew from His Son, the Son of His love, in judgment for our sins. This spiritual suffering of Christ far exceeded those He suffered physically. The Lord Jesus Christ did not just take onto Himself the physical death we deserved. He took onto Himself the spiritual death we deserved as well.

During this time Jesus said, **I thirst!** Imagine--spiritually dead but physically alive, suffering all the righteous wrath of God against sin. His spiritual thirst for saving mankind from its sin was even greater than His physical thirst for water.

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit.**

It is finished! In ancient Greek business, this is what was stamped on a bill to indicate that full payment for what was owed had been paid. In Greek battles, it is what the victor said when he achieved a complete victory. Christ the Victor proclaimed triumphantly from the cross--Paid In Full! The Lord Jesus as the God-Man--God became a sinless man without ceasing to be God--died a human spiritual and physical death to pay *in full* the wages of sin for you and for me.

He had no death of His Own to die. He died your death, and He died my death. He never thought a sinful thought. He never spoke a sinful word. He never committed a sinful act. So when He died, He died for our sin. He died the death we deserved. Christ's work on the cross satisfied all the righteous

demands of a thrice holy God. Nothing less than Christ going to the Cross was needed, and thankfully nothing more is required. God, having accepted Christ's completed work, raised Him from the dead, exalted Him above all things and seated Him at His Own right hand in the heavenlies (Phil. 2 with Eph. 2).

Well, if Christ did all the work and we can contribute nothing to this work in whole or in part, then what is our role in salvation? If our fingerprints cannot be found anywhere on Christ's work of salvation, then what must we do to be saved? How do we enter into life-giving contact with the salvation Christ has procured?

MAN'S PART: BELIEVE

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom. 4:24-25)

Our part is 'believing'. Our part is 'faith'. Why? Because believing is the only thing we can do without doing anything. It is the setting aside of all our work so that we trust *solely* in the work of Christ. 'Believing' rules out our own 'doing' so that the 'doing' of Christ *alone* can be ruled in. You see, God 'did' all the saving; we 'do' all the being saved. Christ 'did' all the work at the cross to earn our salvation, and now God gives the benefits of that work freely to all who believe.

The Apostle Paul put it this way:

For by grace (*God's free giving because of Christ's work*) **are ye saved through faith** (*our believing in and relying upon Christ and His work*); **and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.** (Eph. 2:8-9; italics mine)

Do you see? Grace and faith go hand-in-hand. They work together. Since salvation comes by faith (whereby we set

aside our own works and rely solely on Christ and His Work), God can now save us sinners by grace (as a free gift because Christ earned and paid for it on our behalf--Rom. 4:16). If God had given us something to do, something to earn based on our merit, effort, or performance, then it would not be by grace but by works. But God ruled out all of our own works, merit and performance at the cross, so that He can now save all who believe on Christ and His work, merit and performance. This grace/faith concept goes against all human thinking and wisdom. Man would never have come up with this solution in a million years. Fortunately, God came up with it, devising it on the drawing board of heaven in eternity past, for nothing else would work to give sinners everlasting salvation.

TWO SEEKERS

Maybe, dear reader, you are a seeker today looking for answers. Well, there were seekers in the 1st century as well, and the Bible gives us an account of one who, I know, thinks a lot like me and maybe a lot like you too.

Mat. 19:16-26 tells us about what happened between Jesus Christ and the "rich young ruler." Let's watch.

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Well, this rich, young ruler comes quickly to the heart of the matter. Is there any question more important than this? What must I do to inherit eternal life? But there was a problem, and it is our problem as well. He was thinking in terms of doing something. He wanted to earn or deserve or merit or work for eternal life.

So He (Jesus) said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You

shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Christ answered, well, if you want to be saved on the basis of your own works and merit, then you need to keep the Law Commandments. If you are going to approach God on the basis of doing, then you have to do what God requires and do it perfectly. You have to keep God’s law, keeping it consistently and keeping it continuously without any offense at any time.

The apostle James drives this point home. He said, “If you keep the whole law (a hypothetical case because no one has ever done it) but offend in one point, you are guilty of breaking them all” (James 2:10). The Mosaic Law is summed up in the 10 Commandments, but there are really 613 individual commandments in total. James is saying that if you kept 612 of those commandments and then broke the 613th, the outcome would be the same as if you had broken them all.

Think about it. Imagine hanging over a cliff by a chain consisting of 613 links. How many of those links would need to break for you to fall and plunge to the canyon floor below? Just 1! Likewise if you keep the whole law yet offend in just 1 point you are guilty of all and deserve God’s wrath (not His kindness). Scripture says the soul that sins shall die, and that the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day that he sins (Ezek. 33:12).

So if we come to Christ like the rich young ruler, approaching God on the basis of who we are or what we have done, then we must do God’s law and do it continuously perfectly with no exceptions, not once offending it in even in the smallest matter: “For in the day that you sin, you die.”

The rich young ruler came to Christ thinking salvation had to do with his own merit and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. But Christ used the Law to show him that he could not attain eternal life in that way; the law can only condemn and slay. **When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful...**

Fortunately, there is another way to approach God. This is the way of the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:25-31. In this account, the Apostle Paul is in jail under guard. Let’s follow what happened.

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God...And suddenly there was a great earthquake...and immediately all the doors were opened...And the keeper of the prison...seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried...Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Look at that. This jailor asked the same question that the rich, young ruler had asked but with a different approach, which resulted in a very different ending to the story. He came to Christ and said what must I do *to be saved*. The Philippian jailor recognized that if he was going to be saved, somebody else would have to do it. This verb *‘to be saved’* is in the passive voice, which means someone else carries out the action of the verb. He wanted to know what he had to do *to be saved--* by someone else. If he was going to be saved, he realized that someone else would have to do it.

Eph. 2:8 uses the same passive voice with this verb: **For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.** God does the saving; we are the ones being saved. *God performs* the action of the verb; *we receive* the action of the verb.

Again, Titus 3:5 says the same thing: **The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...** He saves us. God does the saving and you and I “do” the being saved. God is the only Savior in Scripture. He is not one of many saviors. He says: **I am the Lord and beside me there is no Savior** (Is. 43:11).

Paul’s answer to the Philippian jailor’s question was:

**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved.**

While the rich, young ruler went away sorrowful, the Philippian jailor went away rejoicing:

**And when he had brought them into his house,
he set meat before them,
and rejoiced,
believing in God with all his house.**

What must I do to inherit eternal life? There is nothing you can do to inherit eternal life. What must I do to be saved by God? Believe in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember Eph. 2:8-9: This (your salvation) is not of yourselves; it is a free gift from God. Isn't that plain enough? So why then do religions keep on telling us how to be saved by saving ourselves? Why do theologians keep on telling us how we can contribute something to our salvation? Why then do denominations keep on telling us we must add to the crosswork of Christ for salvation?

This is heresy and blasphemy because it sets aside the all-powerful saving work of Christ on the cross, replacing it with the powerless work of sinners. Whenever you add anything to the cross of Christ, you subtract everything from it.



THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHTLY DIVIDING GOD'S WORD

by Steve Walker

Introduction

When God explains how to study His Word, he says it must be *rightly divided*. **“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth”** (II Tim. 2:15). The workman God approves is the one who *rightly divides* His Word. In other words, the student who passes God's test is the one who *rightly divides* the Bible.

But what exactly is *rightly dividing*? What does it accomplish? To some people rightly dividing the Bible sounds complicated, but it is really the easiest and most straightforward thing in the world. It is an everyday, common sense sort of thing. The sort of thing we do almost unconsciously in every area of our lives. Say you have two children--an 8 year old daughter and an 18 year old son. They are both asleep when you leave the house so you write notes to give them their instructions for the day.

You might tell your 8 year old daughter to put on her pretty pink dress, curl her hair and play with her dolls if she gets bored. You might tell your 18 year old son to clean his dirt bike, use the ride-on mower to cut the grass and drive to the store to get some groceries. Now, what would happen if your 8 year old daughter decided to follow the instructions you gave to your son? Or what if your 18 year old son decided to follow the instructions you gave to your daughter? Of course, the result would be ridiculous! It would be mayhem! It could even be a life threatening disaster!

We laugh and recognize immediately how foolish this would be. You see, to operate according to the mother's

wishes, the children must *rightly divide* what she has said or written. Both notes are equally the word of the mother, but the children must distinguish between them and follow the instructions written especially to them. The daughter can read her brother's note for her own learning so that she knows what he is doing, and the son can read his sister's note for his learning so that he knows what she is doing, but they must never confuse them for the result would be chaos.

Although a homely illustration, it brings out the importance of the idea of rightly dividing. We rightly divide in every area of our lives—at home, at work, at church, at play. Everywhere! So when God comes along and tells us to rightly divide His Word, He is not trying to get us to do something difficult to understand and foreign to our experience. He is trying to get us to keep on applying the same common sense, straightforward approach we use, almost unconsciously, in every aspect of our lives **to His Word**.

God has written different instructions to different people at different times, and if we are to operate in accord with His wishes, we must rightly divide these messages. When we approach the Bible in this way it clears up confusion, alleviates the supposed contradictions people think they find in His Word, and makes the Bible the most understandable and practical thing in the world, which is exactly what it was designed to be. When we *rightly divide*, we will understand God's Word and make use of it in the way He intended.

WRONGLY DIVIDING In Israel

Wrongly dividing God's Word can be a dangerous business. In the 13th and 14th chapters of Book of Numbers, we read an account of what happens when we do not rightly divide what God has said. In that passage, God had just delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, guided them through the wilderness, and brought them to the borders of their Promised Land. They were now to enter the Promised Land. They had nothing to fear

because God had already told them that when they entered the land He would fight their battles and protect them. He would send His fear in before them and send hornets in among their enemies and drive the Canaanites out of the land (Ex. 23:27 – 33).

So what will the Israelites do? The children of Israel had reached the borders of the Land that God had promised them, and now they were to follow God's instructions and enter into it. They sent 12 spies to go into the land and gather information about it, checking out the people, the crops, and the cities. After 40 days, the 12 returned to the Israelite's camp and brought with them examples of the fruit of the land—figs and pomegranates and bunches of grapes so large and heavy they had to be put on a pole and carried by two men.

They reported to Moses, Aaron and the whole congregation that the land was everything God said it would be, truly a land flowing with milk and honey. But there were some problems—the people dwelling there were strong and the cities built there were walled securely. The Israelites themselves, according to some, were no more than grasshoppers when compared to the mighty people, no, the giants, who lived in the land.

Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, however, argued for God's viewpoint, trying to convince the people that this would be no problem because God was on their side. God would conquer their enemies. He would protect. They must not wait. God told them to go in now--TODAY! But they did not listen. They ignored the instructions God gave that day and refused to go in when God said. Instead, they followed the word of the other 10 spies, who argued from mere human viewpoint, leading the Israelites into rebellion.

“And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and wept that night and all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt or would God we had died in the wilderness! And wherefore has the LORD brought us unto

this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return unto Egypt. (Num. 14:1-3)

What irony! They did not want to follow God into the Promised Land. They wanted to follow another leader back into Egypt. They would rather die alone in the wilderness than go with God into the Promised Land. God would have brought them into it and would have given them victory over their enemies, but the Israelites refused to listen. Things got so bad, that if the Glory of God had not separated Moses from the wrath of the people, they would have stoned him. Just think—these are the same people who, not long before, had seen all the wonders God worked to deliver them out of bondage in Egypt. They saw the plagues and the annihilation of the Egyptian army and the parting of the Red Sea and the miraculous preservation in the wilderness, and on and on.

But now, having arrived at the very land God had promised them, they rebelled, refusing to believe that He would accomplish all that He had said. In light of this rebellion, God changed His instructions to them. Before He had told them to go into the Land, **but now** He tells them to NOT go into the land. Before He had told them to exit the wilderness and enter the Land, **but now** He tells them to stay in the wilderness for 40 years. Before God had told them to live in the Land, **but now** He tells them they are to die in the wilderness (which is exactly what they asked for when they murmured against God and Moses). Before God had told them He would conquer their enemies, **but now** He tells them He will not. “And the people mourned greatly” (Num. 14:20-39).

It is at this point that we come to our example of the importance of rightly dividing God’s Word. Now we come to the NEXT DAY, the day **after** God’s Word told them to enter into the land.

“And they rose the next morning and got them up into the mountain, saying Lo we be here and will go up into the place which the Lord has promised for we have

sinned...They presumed to go up unto the hill top, nevertheless the ark of covenant of the Lord and Moses departed not out of camp” (Num. 14:40-44)

Here is the problem. This is the **next** day! It is not the day **before**! Yesterday God told them to enter the land and have victory over their enemies. But today they were to NOT enter the land but wander in the wilderness for 40 years. **Yesterday**, God’s Word for them was to go north into the land, engage the inhabitants in battle and be assured that God would give them the victory so they could live peacefully in their Promised Land. But that was **yesterday**! And **today** is **today**! Between **yesterday** and **today**, God’s Word for them had changed. **Today** they were instructed to go south (not north), camp in the wilderness (not in the Promised Land) for 40 years and die there. **Yesterday** God would have given them victory. **Today** He would not.

Now let’s be very clear. Both instructions are truly the Word of God, but they were spoken at different times under different circumstances and, therefore, must be **rightly divided**. The Israelites, however, **wrongly divided** them, and the results were disastrous.

And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp (Num. 14:41-44)

The Israelites made the mistake of ignoring God’s Word for them today. Instead they decided to follow His Word for yesterday. Disaster soon followed. Moses tried to warn the people that they were wrong, knowing that God would not be

with them on this day. They were wrongly dividing God's Word, and Moses refused to go with them. The Israelites went up anyway, gathered their forces for battle and proclaimed, "Lo we be here".

Like our illustration of the mother's notes to her children above, this would be very funny if it were not so tragic or, worse, so deadly. The Israelites were calling on God to bless them and protect them in the battle that God and Moses had just told them not to go into because He would, in fact, not bless and protect them. You see, they were following God's Word, but it was not God's Word for them for TODAY. They were following God's instructions for yesterday. The result of this was that they went into battle and were defeated terribly.

The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

God's Word For Today

Such are the disastrous results of wrongly dividing God's Word. The results are just as disastrous today when we fail to rightly divide the Bible. God has added to and changed His instructions many times in the Bible, and it is critical that we understand these changes and act accordingly. We do that by *rightly dividing*. When God makes major changes in His instructions for man, the Bible calls them dispensational changes. One such change occurred in the middle of the Book of Acts, and this change continues to impact us today.

Acts presents the transition between two dispensations, each of which operates according its own distinct instruction manual. Acts begins by addressing Israel through Peter and the 12 in accord with their divine instruction manual—The Law of Moses. It ends, however, by addressing all people, especially the Gentiles, apart from Israel, through the Apostle Paul in

accord with their divine instruction manual—The Gospel of Grace.

Just like our previous examples, we have a change in God's instructions and the people that they address. In the beginning of Acts God tells His assembly in Jerusalem, headed up by Peter and the 12 and then later by James, that they must follow the Law. But later in Acts He tells another group of believers, made up mostly of Gentiles outside Israel and headed up by the Apostle Paul, that they must NOT follow the Law and instead follow God's Grace Message given to Paul (Ro. 6:14).

So what happens when those who had previously been told to follow God's Word in the Law come in contact with those who are now being told to not follow the Law but follow God's Word in Paul's Grace Message? Well, sparks flew! Acts 15 gives a detailed account. This is no archaic question, bearing little importance for us today. It is, in fact, the million dollar question of Christianity. It is the million dollar question for me and you, dear reader. How we answer this question will not only have consequences today but for all eternity. How we answer this question is the difference between confusion and chaos that leads to disaster and clarity and order that leads to eternal life.

Acts 15 tells us that the problem started when men from the Jerusalem assembly (who earlier had been told to follow God's Word as found in the Law under Peter and the 12) went to the assembly in Gentile Antioch and commanded the believers there to follow the Law. These men from Jerusalem did not realize or, worse, they ignored the fact that God had given another set of instructions called the Grace Message through the Apostle Paul. When the ones from Jerusalem, who were under the Law, demanded that those in Antioch, who were not under the Law but under Grace, must follow the Law by being circumcised, confusion and chaos resulted and disaster was close behind.

This conflict caused great dissension and much disputation in Antioch, leading Paul and others to hurry to Jerusalem to resolve the issue once and for all. Circumcision, you see, was just the beginning. If the men from Jerusalem

could force these predominantly Gentile believers to be circumcised according to the Law, then they would also have to do every thing else found in the Law as well. If they were circumcised, shouldn't they also give sacrifices in Jerusalem? Keep the Sabbath? Maintain the dietary restrictions? Must they not, in fact, do all the things in the Law? And if this point could be won, then God's work among the Gentiles would be destroyed.

Let's eavesdrop on the proceedings in Acts 15:3-19. When they arrived in Jerusalem, Paul and those with him, the church and apostles and elders, received them. Paul immediately told them about "**all the things that God had done with them**" among the Gentiles. A certain sect of the Pharisees who believed, however, said, "**It was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.**"

Then Peter stood up and said several amazing things. He stands up and attests to the fact that God's program with the world was changing. When the Book of Acts began, Gentiles who wished to be saved came to God in the same way Jews came to God—through the nation Israel and her Law. But now, as Acts is closing, Gentiles are being saved apart from the Law. Now God is giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who believe (even though they were not proselytes to Judaism or God-fearers in the Temple) apart from Israel!

But Peter does not stop there. Even more amazingly, he goes on to declare that whereas before in Acts the Gentiles were saved as the Jews, now, as Acts is closing, the Jews were being saved as the Gentiles. The Gentiles were not being saved through Israel and her covenants and Law, but through the new "word from God," the Gospel of Grace.

In dropping these bombshells, Peter recognized and wanted the others in the Jerusalem assembly to recognize that God's program for the world had changed, and that God revealed His new program to and through the Apostle Paul. Paul is the one who explains it, and we must go to his epistles if we are to understand what God is doing today. (Gal. 1 and Eph. 3). Today, both Jew and Gentile are being brought together

under sin so that both can receive salvation on the basis of pure grace and faith (Acts 15:11 cf. Rom. 3).

Contrary to popular belief, Paul went to the council at Jerusalem to instruct Peter, the 12 and James about what God is doing today, not the other way around.

This is a great dispensational change, and it is important that we make this distinction because it affects every aspect of our Christian life. The reason the "church" of today is so impotent and confused, having little impact on the lost world around her, is largely because she does not distinguish God's programs by rightly dividing His Word. Just like the brother and sister and the Children of Israel in the wilderness, the 'church' is, for the most part, following the wrong instructions. She needs to regain an understanding God's instructions for her today and to see that she must *rightly divide* the Bible.

How much confusion and divisiveness would disappear if we stopped trying to make God's Law instructions for Israel apply to us today? How much confusion and divisiveness would disappear if we recognized and appreciated that the whole Bible is indeed for us but that Paul's Epistles were written especially to us for our obedience today? The Old Testament and Gospels contain God's Word for Israel from yesterday and in a future day. Paul's Epistles contain God's Word for the Body of Christ today. Rightly divide and the result is nothing short of righteousness and life and glory.

Contrary to popular belief, the Book of Acts is not about the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ! It is about the temporary setting aside of the Nation of Israel.

Question and Answer

A recent reader asked:

What is the difference between Law and Grace?

This is a very good question and one of the most important we can ask if we going to understand what God is doing today. Do the two work together or are they mutually exclusive systems of operation?

The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 6:20 that we are not “**under Law but under Grace.**” Too often we think of this simply in terms of no longer having to observe some of the things found in the Law--things like keeping the sacrifices or the feast days or the tithe or the Sabbath or the dietary restrictions. But to think in these terms is to miss Paul’s point. Paul is saying much, much more. Paul’s point is that God is not dealing with us on the basis of a Law System. He is dealing with us on the basis of a Grace System.

So then, the real question we need to ask is: How is being dealt with under a Law System differ from being dealt with under a Grace System? First, let’s look at the Law. The Law was a system of commands with associated cursings for disobedience (usually death) and blessings for obedience. The Law System does not say **Do Not Commit Adultery**. It says **Do Not Commit Adultery, and if you do commit adultery you shall die**. The Law commanded our flesh to obey first, after which, God would bless and reward. But this is like commanding a penniless beggar to first come up with a million dollars, after which, we will reward him with more! Or like commanding an invalid to first set a new world record for the 100 yard dash, after which, we will bless him!

The Law calls on our sick, powerless, sinful, fallen flesh to produce human righteousness, but it neither equips nor empowers it to do so. Israel lived under this system. She was told in Lev. 26 that if she produced righteous obedience to God’s commandments, then He would bless and enrich her. If,

on the other hand, she disobeyed, then He would curse the nation and leave her impoverished. Israel lived for 1500 years, from Moses to Paul, under this Law system, yet in spite of all her numerous advantages--she had God’s promises, God’s presence, God’s Word, God’s protection, God’s leadership, etc.—she failed to keep the Law, and her history was characterized as one of falling under the curses not receiving the blessings.

If this was true for Israel with all her benefits it is even truer for us Gentiles. Under a Law System, we won’t fare any better. Our sinful, fallen flesh is just as sinful and just as fallen as the Jews. Our flesh lacks the resources needed to produce a righteousness of its own that would call forth God’s blessings. The record of Israel’s history demonstrated once and for all that sinful mankind cannot approach God on the basis of a Law System. We sinners will always fail. We will always deserve the curses, never the blessings.

The last thing we need is to be put in a system that blesses and enriches us based on our trying to do something. Why? Because we CANNOT do it! We are like the penniless beggar and the sick invalid. We are powerless to do anything that pleases God because of sin. What we need most is to be dealt with on the basis of a system that blesses and enriches us first and then tells us to do something, because it is those very blessings and riches given “upfront” that equip and empower us to do things that please God.

And this is where Grace comes in. Just when things were most hopeless because we could do nothing to help ourselves, the God of Hope stepped in and did the work required for us--on our behalf. He sent His Son to die on the cross for us, taking all our sin and condemnation and death onto Himself there, so that He might give us eternal life as a free gift simply on the basis of faith or believing. It is not because of our doing or work, but because of His doing and work on the cross.

This is Grace. Grace takes the penniless beggar and enriches him first. Only after that does it teach and ask him to use those riches for God. Grace takes the impotent invalid and

gives him eternal life as a free gift first. Only after that, does it teach and ask him to use this blessing in God's service.

Grace takes lost and powerless sinners, sinners like you and sinners like me, and saves all those who believe, all those who set aside their own doing so that they can rely solely on the doing of Christ. Both systems are based on work. In the case of the Law, it is our work, which is always unacceptable to God and never enough for God. In the case of Grace, it is the work of Christ, which is perfect and complete and acceptable to God and always more than enough for God.

If we are going to stand before God we had better be standing before Him on the basis of the righteousness of Christ and not on the basis of our own righteousness, which Isaiah calls filthy rags and the Apostle Paul calls dung.

**GRACE
IS ALL GOD IS FREE
TO DO FOR YOU AND ME
BECAUSE
OF WHAT HIS SON DID
ON THE CROSS OF
CALVARY.**

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT OUR
MAIL BOX:**

We had some problems receiving mail from our readers over the last 2 months. That problem has been corrected. If you mailed a letter to our P.O. Box, and it was returned-to-sender, please try again.

**God Invites You Ministry
P.O. Box 502
Woodstock, IL 60098**

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT OUR
WEBSITE:**

The www.godinvitesyou.com website is now fully updated with audio Bible studies. We are now in I Corinthians 5 and 6 learning about the GRACE LIFE and Satan's plan of evil.