

INVESTIGATING THE VERACITY OF PAUL'S UNBELIEVABLE CLAIM

In the last session, we laid forth Paul's unbelievable claim that **the dispensation of the grace of God** (Eph. 3:2) began with Paul and was unknown before its revelation.

Such an astounding claim deserves further investigation. Such investigation is what Peter, James, and the others did in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem council. However, what we want to do today is see whether Paul does share a Gospel message that is *fundamentally new and different* from that shared previously.

TWO CLEAR STATEMENTS EXAMINED

A note to the reader: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational to the grace gospel. However, it is not unique to the grace gospel since it is also the foundation for the Kingdom gospel. Therefore, this study will assume the knowledge of the all-important work of Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. There is not gospel of any kind outside of Christ's work.

This study will look at two of the clear statements of Paul proving that the *Pauline pattern* (1 Tim. 1:15-16) is uniquely characterized by two things: separation of this gospel from the law, and receipt of this gospel by faith alone without works.

ROMANS 3:21-22

21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **22.** Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

Not only does Paul make a contrast from **now** (v. 21) to *then* (compare v. 20), but he states that **the righteousness of God...is manifested** and this has been done **without the law**. An analysis of this sentence shows that this righteousness was **witnessed by the law and the prophets**, but that it is now **without the law...manifested**. This is a new thing. Paul emphasizes this in verse 22 when he notes that this *new* manifestation of God's righteousness is not **by faith of Jesus Christ and upon all them that believe**.

In addition to Romans 3:21-22, consider these complimentary passages which teach salvation apart from the Law: Romans 8:3, Galatians 2:16, and Philippians 3:9. I think it is difficult for those of us who have never been under the Law to appreciate what an astoundingly new thing this was for Paul to introduce.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **9.** Not of works, lest any man should boast.

While the last passage looked at the separation from the law, this passage emphasizes that salvation is **the gift of God** and given **by grace** and **through faith**. Once again, even though such a truth is all-but-too-routine for us, this was an unbelievably startling proclamation by Paul. This is especially true when he adds the confirmation of verse 9, that salvation is **not of works**. The emphasis that the salvation is **not of yourselves** (v. 8) is also emphasized in Romans 4:5 and 2 Timothy 1:9.

THE CLEAR STATEMENTS CROSS REFERENCED

While we have only looked at two passages to show that the Pauline pattern of salvation is wholly outside of the law and is received by faith alone, it would only take a basic cross-reference guide to see that *all similar references come from Paul alone*. The only possible exception would be the Gospel of John (see session 3 for a discussion on that topic). Abraham was given a faith-based promise (Gen. 15:6), but this was not for his personal salvation but rather for his role in the Abrahamic land/nation covenant. Even if Abraham did receive immediate righteousness in Christ and salvation by faith alone, *why is he the only example in the Old Testament?* One may bring up David (as Paul does in Romans 4:6, but the example used speaks of a future millennial blessing, not a present reality in David's day.

So even with the use of poor hermeneutics to use the examples of Abraham and David, one is left with these two examples alone. Not only are there no further examples of individuals saved by faith alone, but there is no recorded teaching of such either. In fact, a simple look at any cross-reference tool, as mentioned above, shows that *there simply are not any non-Pauline passages that speak of salvation outside the law and by faith alone*.

It almost doesn't even take a cross-reference tool for even average believers to know that the grace-message of salvation comes in Pauline passages and not from the Hebrew Scriptures or even the Gospels. Yet it is also "common knowledge" by *run-of-the-mill* Christianity that "salvation has always been the same."

Wouldn't it be better to let Scripture announce its requirements for salvation? I contend that when we do so we see that Paul did, indeed, receive a revelation that *changed everything* and became the beginning of **the dispensation of the grace of God** (Eph. 3:2).