

Considering Paul's proprietary program, let's delve into the crux of the matter: Paul posits that his Gospel is unique, and upon examining the evidence, his claim holds true. This notion is particularly challenging for a large part of the Christian world to accept, primarily because the principles of Covenant Theology have dominated most of Christendom.

A LITTLE HISTORY

Early Christian documents, from the Didache to the Council of Trent, rarely mention grace-based salvation, which could be due to their focus on other topics. Yet, it's likely that the abandonment of Pauline theology by many, as noted in 2 Timothy 1:15, led to this absence.

For instance, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a document from the Reformed tradition written in 1647, includes the question, "What does God require of us, that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?" The proposed answer is, "To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption." This document emphasizes faith in Christ and repentance as necessary elements for salvation, aligning with a covenant theology perspective rather than a grace-based one.

It wasn't until around the 1800s that the teachings started to shift. During this period, influential religious leaders like JN Darby, CI Scofield, EW Bullinger, JC O'Hare, Cornelius Stam, and Charles Baker began to advocate for a dispensational view that acknowledged a distinct Pauline Gospel. However, by this time, Christian thought had already been deeply ingrained in tradition, which made the acceptance of this interpretation challenging.

Historically, many may have advocated for a grace-based interpretation, but these teachings have often been overshadowed by Covenant Theology in Christian thought. Consequently, alternate interpretations like the Pauline Gospel have been largely forgotten.

PAUL'S CLAIMS

This study posits that Paul's apostleship is unique from the Twelve Apostles, with a different Gospel message. We'll explore whether Paul makes such claims, a crucial question for our understanding.

In **Galatians 1:11-12** Paul makes an audacious statement: "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." This proclamation by Paul is a clear assertion of his gospel's distinctiveness.

Paul often refers to "my gospel" in his letters, not just personalizing "the gospel", but emphasizing his unique message. His teachings were not a restatement of other apostles' teachings but a revelation from Jesus Christ.

Suppose you referred to "the Gospel" as "my gospel." This might raise eyebrows, leading some to think you're claiming a unique Gospel interpretation. You could be accused of trying to elevate your teachings, while others might be intrigued, expecting new insights. This language would draw attention as it signals something unique, different, even proprietary.

Let's take a few minutes to consider the Biblical evidence. Is Paul's Gospel unique?

THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Paul's Gospel is marked by the concept of grace. Unlike other teachings within early Christianity, Paul's message centers on salvation as a gift from God, entirely separate from human works. This grace-alone doctrine is distinctly different from the messages delivered by Jesus and Peter, which incorporated works alongside faith. Let's explore the biblical evidence and compare the distinctiveness of Paul's Gospel to understand its unique significance in Christian theology.

1. Paul's Grace-Based Gospel

- **Ephesians 2:8-9**: Salvation by grace through faith, not by works

- **Romans 11:6:** Grace and works are mutually exclusive
- **1 Corinthians 1:17:** Paul's mission to preach, not perform religious rituals
- **Galatians 5:12:** Paul's strong language against works like circumcision
- 2. **Comparison with Pre-Pauline Teachings**
 - **Jesus's Teachings**
 - **Mark 10:17-22:** The rich young ruler and the importance of keeping commandments
 - **Matthew 7:21:** Doing God's will as a requirement for entering the kingdom of heaven
 - **Peter's Teachings**
 - **Acts 2:38:** Repentance and baptism for the remission of sins
 - **James's Epistle**
 - **James 2:24:** Justification by works and not by faith only
- 3. **Paul's Unique Revelation**
 - **Ephesians 3:2-3:** The dispensation of grace revealed to Paul
 - **Colossians 1:25-26:** The mystery now revealed to the saints
- 4. **The Council of Jerusalem**
 - **Acts 15 and Galatians 2:** The resolution of the distinct messages preached by Paul and Peter
 - **Galatians 2:7:** The gospel of the uncircumcision for Paul and the gospel of the circumcision for Peter
- 5. **Implications of Paul's Gospel**
 - Distinctiveness in doctrine and audience
 - The theological shift from a works-inclusive gospel to a grace-alone gospel

Paul's Gospel, as revealed through his epistles, emphasizes salvation by grace through faith, distinctly separate from works. This doctrine is unique and profoundly different from the messages delivered by Jesus and Peter, which incorporated works alongside faith. Paul's claims of receiving his gospel through direct revelation from Jesus Christ underscore its uniqueness and importance. The resolution of these differences at the Council of Jerusalem highlights the distinctiveness of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Understanding this distinction is crucial for grasping the full scope of Christian theology and the transformative message of grace that Paul championed.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evidence presented in this chapter supports the view that Paul's Gospel is indeed unique. Unlike the Gospel of the circumcision, which emphasized works alongside faith, Paul's Gospel is characterized solely by grace, a gift bestowed by God independent of human deeds. This understanding was received directly from Jesus Christ, as Paul himself attests in his letters. The uniqueness of Paul's Gospel had profound implications for the early Christian Church, leading to a historic meeting to resolve the differences in the preached messages. Recognizing the distinctiveness of Paul's Gospel is crucial for our study, as it lays the groundwork for further exploration into its implications for contemporary Christian thought and practice. As we continue this journey, we will delve deeper into the nuances of Paul's teachings, uncovering the transformative power of a Gospel wholly grounded in grace.