

**THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE**  
**(LESSON FOUR)**  
**A DEFINITION OF GRACE (PART 3)**

**EPHESIANS 1**

**NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

*1 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints [in Ephesus], the faithful in Christ Jesus.*

*2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!*

*3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.*

*4 For he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight in love.*

*5 He did this by predestining us to adoption as his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of his will –*

*6 to the praise of the glory of his grace that he has freely bestowed on us in his dearly loved Son.*

*7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace*

*8that he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight.*

*9 He did this when he revealed to us the secret of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,*

*10 toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ – the things in heaven and the things on earth.*

*11 In Christ we too have been claimed as God's own possession, since we were predestined according to the one purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will*

*12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, would be to the praise of his glory.*

*13 And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) – when you believed in Christ – you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit,*

*14 who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.*

*15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,*

*16 I do not cease to give thanks for you when I remember you in my prayers.*

*17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him,*

*18 – since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened – so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*

*19 and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength.*

*20 This power he exercised in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms*

*21 far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

*22 And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things.*

*23 Now the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

In this lesson, we will conclude our attempt to provide a definition of grace and to examine its characteristics and functions. We will do so by considering passages in **Galatians 1**, and **Titus 2**.

### **Galatians 1:6-9 (The New English Translation Bible)**

*6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel -*

*7 not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ.*

*8 But even if we (or an angel from heaven) should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell!*

*9 As we have said before, and now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell!*

The epistle of Paul to the Galatians was written to answer specific problems. In order to properly understand the letter, we need to appreciate the situation that motivated the apostle to write it. Not very long after the Christians in Galatia had received New Testament salvation, agitators apparently from Jerusalem came among them. These agitators attacked Paul personally and taught a false gospel and a distorted form of Christianity. Their "gospel" required the Galatians to be circumcised and to observe the Mosaic Law. They insisted that a

belief in the saving work of Jesus Christ was not sufficient for salvation.

The agitators who are also known as Judaizers, were not content to merely proclaim their brand of the gospel. They also tried to discredit Paul who had pioneered the Galatian churches. Their attacks took three forms. (1) They claimed that Paul was a renegade who had defied his superiors, the apostles in Jerusalem. (2) They said that Paul had recently argued with Peter over whether or not the gospel required Gentile converts to Christianity to become Jews in order to ensure that their salvation was safeguarded. (3) They started a rumour that Paul had originally taught that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be saved, but that he had now compromised his message in order to more easily accommodate the Gentiles. Paul responded to all three forms of attack in this letter.

On their part, the Galatian Christians were being swayed, both by the rumours concerning Paul and by the persuasive arguments of the agitators regarding the necessity for them to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses. In fact, by the time Paul wrote to them, they were in the process of deserting the gospel of the grace of God and consequently God Himself.

Paul's purpose in writing this letter was to expose the error of the agitators and of their gospel and to uncover their impure motives. His ultimate objective was to prevent his beloved new converts in Galatia from embracing a false gospel and as a consequence to lose their spiritual freedom in Christ. He did not want them to become entangled with all the rules and regulations of the Mosaic Law which would eventually lead them into legalism. Against the proud imagination of the agitators that they could earn their own salvation and secure it by keeping the Law, Paul boasted only in the finished work of Calvary.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul did not include his usual thanksgiving immediately after his opening greeting. Instead he moves directly into a rebuke of the Galatian Christians. This departure from his standard letter-writing style is evidence of how serious he considered the situation in Galatia to be.

In this passage, Paul accuses the Galatian Christians of deserting the grace of God. The word “*grace*” here is in the locative of domain or realm. God called the Galatians in the realm of grace. When He effectually summoned them to a participation in the salvation obtained by Jesus Christ on the Cross, it was not on the basis of works. It was on the basis of a salvation unmerited by them and freely offered out of the pure generosity and love of the heart of God, with no strings attached to it. This put the Galatians in a position in relationship to God in which they were the objects of His everlasting favour. Now they are moving from grace back into Law. They were abandoning liberty for legalism! And they were doing it very quickly.

The Galatians were not simply “changing churches,” they were actually abandoning the very grace of God! When a person deserts the grace of God they are in imminent danger of deserting the God of grace! They were abandoning the position of grace, the relation toward God which made them the objects of the special favour of Jesus Christ and participants in the benefits of His grace. They were doing so to put themselves under law which could only bring them into spiritual bondage.

Brothers and sisters, we must never forget that the Christian life is a living relationship with Jesus Christ. A person does not become a Christian merely by agreeing to a set of doctrines; he or she becomes a Christian by submitting to Jesus Christ and trusting Him. We cannot mix grace and works, because the one excludes the other. Salvation is the gift of God’s grace, purchased for us by Jesus Christ on the cross. To turn from grace to Law is to desert the God who saved us.

Like Paul, the legalistic Judaizers claimed to be preaching “the Gospel,” but there cannot be two gospels, one centered in works and the other centered in grace. Paul’s contention was that the Judaizers were preaching a different message - one so different from the true Gospel that it was no gospel at all. The Judaizers were saying, “We believe in Jesus Christ but we have something to add to what you already believe.” As if anything could be added to the grace of God to make the gospel better.

In **Galatians 1:7**, Paul says that the false doctrine of the Judaizers was “*disturbing*” or troubling the saints at Galatia. The Greek word translated “*disturbing*,” carries with it the idea of perplexity, confusion, and unrest. Grace always leads to peace, but the Galatians had deserted grace and therefore had no peace in their hearts. They had begun their Christian lives in the power of the Holy Spirit but now they were going to try to continue in the power of the flesh. In **Galatians 3:1-3** Paul writes, “*You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?*” (**New English Translation**)

That which the Galatian Christians had begun with the Holy Spirit was the Christian walk. To try to bring this walk to a successful conclusion by human effort is an impossibility. The Christian walk can only be brought to a successful conclusion in the way it began - by the grace of God.

It is very important for us to understand that we are not only saved by the grace of God but we are kept by His grace and we must live by grace. When a Christian turns away from living by God’s grace, he or she must depend on their own power. This always leads

to failure and disappointment. This is what Paul means by the term “*fallen away from grace.*” In **Galatians 5:1-5** Paul writes, “*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery. Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace! For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love*” (**New English Translation**).

The words “*fallen away from grace,*” convey the idea of moving out of the domain of grace into the domain of works; it means ceasing to depend on God’s resources and depending on our own resources.

The Judaizers, wanted the Galatian Christians to believe that they were “missing something,” that they would be more “spiritual” if they practiced the Law with its demands and disciplines. But Paul makes it clear that the Law adds nothing - because nothing can be added! Instead, the Law comes in as a thief and robs the child of God of the spiritual riches he has in Christ. It puts him back into bankruptcy, responsible for a debt he is unable to pay.

To live by grace means to depend on God’s abundant supply of every need. To live by Law means to depend on our own strength and that means being left to get by without God’s supply. That is what Paul means when he speaks about being “*fallen away from grace.*” It means that we are “fallen out of the realm of God’s grace.”

Paul uses strong language to show how seriously he considered the differences to be between his gospel and the message of the legalists. He wants to show the Galatians that the controversy is not between one teacher and another, but between truth and error. In **Galatians 1:8-9** he writes, *“But even if we (or an angel from heaven) should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell!”*

Paul was saying in effect that if he or any human being or even an angel from heaven should preach a message contrary to the message that the Galatians had originally heard and believed, a message other than the message of salvation based entirely on the grace of God and excluding any work of man, they should be condemned to hell! I wonder if his words are still relevant today?

I wonder if we are beginning to appreciate the great gulf that God has affixed between grace and works?

In order to clear up a grave misunderstanding of grace we turn to **Titus 2:11-13** as it is rendered by the **New English Bible**:

*11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people.*

*12 It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,*

*13 as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

In this passage Paul emphatically refutes the theory, held by so many Christians including pastors and other church leaders, that exposure to the doctrines of grace will result in persons living carelessly, without any restraint.



The noted Welsh Protestant minister, preacher and medical doctor **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones** made the following remarks in his commentary on chapter **6** of the book of **Romans**:

“If it is true that where sin abounded grace has much more abounded, well then, ‘shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound yet further?’

‘First of all let me make a comment, to me a very important and vital comment. The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace. That is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel.’” I have come find out that Doctor Lloyd-Jones was absolutely correct.

Paul states that the same grace that saves us trains us to live godly lives. Contrary to what some Christians believe and teach grace does not promote slackness, rather it promotes holiness. In fact, grace is the greatest holiness instructor of all. In verse **13** Paul informs us that it is the grace of God that causes us to be ready for the coming of the Lord and when He comes grace will accompany Him. The apostle Peter also informs us of this fact in **1 Peter 1:13**: “*Therefore, get your minds ready for action by being fully sober, and set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed*”(New English Translation Translation).

My brothers and sisters, rules and standards cannot produce holiness. They are the architects of self-righteousness and legalism. True biblical holiness is a product of the grace of God. Paul affirms this in **2 Corinthians 5:14-17**: *“For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer. So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come!”* (**New English Translation**)

The **Amplified Bible** renders the passage as follows: *“For the love of Christ controls and compels us, because we have concluded this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that all those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for their sake. So from now on we regard no one from a human point of view [according to worldly standards and values]. Though we have known Christ from a human point of view, now we no longer know Him in this way. Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].”*

We close by quoting the very last verse in the entire Bible—**Revelation 22:21**. What is the final idea, the last word, the concluding theme that Almighty God uttered in His magnificent revelation contained in the sixty-six books of the Bible? What are His parting words to His bride, His elect, blood-bought, ransomed ones?

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.*” My brothers and sisters, the final word in the Bible is grace, the amazing grace of God! Hallelujah!