
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study

by Warren Doud

Lesson 215: **Acts 13:13-24**

Grace Notes

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ACTS, Lesson 215, Acts 13:13-24

Contents

Acts 13:13-24.....	3
Acts 13:13	3
Acts 13:14	4
Acts 13:15	5
Acts 13:16	6
Acts 13:17	7
Acts 13:18	7
Acts 13:19	7
Acts 13:20	8
Acts 13:21	8
Acts 13:22	9
Acts 13:23	10
Acts 13:24	10
Legalism	11
Preaching	16
Repentance	17
Baptism	21

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 3
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

Acts 13:13-24

Acts 13:13

13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Paul and his company loosed from Paphos

οἱ περὶ Παῦλον, “those around Paul”. It means “a man and his followers”. ¹ From here on, Paul ranks first in Acts, except in Acts 14:2 and 15 12,25, for special reasons.

Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, possibly accompanied by other believers, “set sail” from Paphos to go to the mainland.

they came to Perga in Pamphylia

Paul is now setting the project’s agenda, it seems, and he leads them to the port city of Perga, intending to go into the highlands to Antioch in Pisidia. It’s possible that the only reason Perga is mentioned is that it was the closest port to Paphos, the distance was not great, and there would have been plenty of shipping available.

Pamphylia was a small district, along the shores of the Mediterranean, east of Cilicia. Under the Romans, after the battle of Actium, when Augustus Caesar divided up the provinces, Pamphylia became an imperial province, governed by a *propraetor*. In Paul’s day, during the reign of Claudius, it was united with Lycia and Pisidia into a considerably large Roman province. Later in time, it was united also with Galatia.

Perga is the capital city, about seven miles upstream from the mouth of the river Cestrus; and it was most famous for its great temple of Diana of Perga. (See Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, on the subject of building temples in provinces)

Pamphylia was a haven for pirates. Pirate activity on the Mediterranean was the terror of the ancient world until the Romans finally wore them down. Even then, these people, along with Cretans and others, added greatly to the threat to life, limb, and property.

Paul and Barnabas did not stay in Perga long, perhaps with good reason as the region was notorious for mosquitoes and malaria.

John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem

We don’t know why John Mark left the group to return to Jerusalem. Some commentators suggested that he was ill, perhaps having contracted malaria; but that doesn’t explain why Paul was so displeased with him that he refused to take him along on another journey (Acts 15:35-39). In fact, disagreement over this matter caused a breach between Barnabas and Saul.

Apparently Barnabas was not offended by John Mark’s leaving, because he was certainly eager to have him as a colleague on a future missionary endeavor.

There were certainly real dangers to be faced, of which John Mark would have been well aware; and if he did not have the express calling of the Holy Spirit as his primary motivation, he understandably could have been very nervous about proceeding. Of course, Paul would not have been at all sympathetic with that.

“Perils of rivers” and “perils of robbers” – these words express the very dangers which St. Paul would be most likely to encounter on his journey from Perga in Pamphylia to Antioch in Pisidia. The lawless and marauding habits of the population of those mountains which separate the table land in the interior of Asia Minor from the plains on the south coast were notorious in all parts of ancient history. Strabo uses strong language both of the Isaurians who separated Cappadocia from Cilicia, and of their neighbors the Pisidians, whose native fortresses were the barrier between

¹ Robertson, Acts 13:13

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 4
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

Phrygia and Pamphylia. We have the same character of of these robber tribes in Xenophon, who is the first to mention them; and in Zosimus, who tells us of the adventures of a robber chief who defied the Romans and died a desperate death in these mountains.²

Xenophon has Socrates say to Pericles: "Well, and have you ever heard tell of the Mysians and Pisidians living within the territory of the great king, who, inside their mountain fortresses, lightly armed, are able to rush down and inflict much injury on the king's territory by their raids, while preserving their own freedom?"³

Acts 13:14

13:14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down.

This first preaching was likely here in Antioch in Pisidia. One commentator (Ramsay) suggests that malaria caused them to leave Perga right away to go to higher altitudes.

Gal. 4:13, "You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first."

They did preach at Perga on their return trip (Acts. 14:25), apparently with some success. In the third century there were martyrs of this church at Perga, which suffered under the Emperor Decius. In the 4th century, there was a famous church here, over which Jovinian was bishop or pastor. In the 5th century there was a church here, whose bishop is mentioned in the as one who assisted in the first council at Ephesus. In later centuries there are several other references in history to the church of Perga.

² Conybeare and Howson, chapter 6, *Mark's Return to Jerusalem*

³ Xenophon, *The Memorabilia*

But Barnabas and Paul apparently hurried away from Perga on this part of their journey.

Pisidia

Alexander the Great, when he heard that Memnon's fleet was in the Aegean, and marched from Perga to rejoin Parmenio in Phrygia, found some of the worst difficulties of his whole campaign in penetrating through this district.

Pisidia was the scene of one of the roughest campaigns connected with the wars of Antiochus the Great, carried out among the hill forts near the upper waters of the Cestrus and Erymedon. (An episode of the TV documentary series *Sunset Earth* was about a Turkish village on the Erymedon river.)

No population through the midst of which St. Paul ever traveled have more of those perils by robbers than the wild and lawless clans of the Pisidian Highlanders.

Antioch in Pisidia⁴

Popularly so called, to distinguish it from Syrian Antioch, though it was not actually in Pisidia, but was a Phrygian town on its borders. It had been made a Roman colony in 8 B.C., and was at this time the chief centre of military and civil administration in the south-western portion of the vast province of Galatia.

There were many cities and towns in various districts of these countries called Antioch: some have reckoned up not less than twelve. ⁵ Pliny called this town "Antioch of Pisidia", but Strabo called it "Antioch of Phrygia", and Ptolemy called it "Antioch of Pamphylia".⁶

This Antioch lay on an important line of communication westward by Apamea with the valley of the Meander River and eastward by Iconium with the country behind the Taurus. In

⁴ Conybeare and Howson, chapter 6, *Situation of Antioch*

⁵ Clarke, *Acts*

⁶ Gloag, *Acts...*, Vol. 2, p 20.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 5
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

this general direction, between Smyrna and Ephesus on the one hand, and the Cilician Gates which lead down to Tarsus on the other, conquering armies and trading caravans, Persian satraps, Roman proconsuls and Turkish pashas, have traveled for centuries.

went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day

This was the most convenient time, perhaps the only time, that people who might be sympathetic to the gospel teaching would be gathered together.

and sat down

Paul and Barnabas took their places as visiting Jews, possibly sitting with the rabbis in the prominent seats.

Some Gentiles must have been in the synagogue, too, either proselytes or novices. The Jews may well have been teaching Gentiles the Old Testament scriptures to prepare them to become proselytes. See verses 42 and 48.

The synagogue in dispersion was a center of learning, a source of help in community needs, a place for meetings, and a court of justice. The synagogues became a part of public life in Gentile communities. Numerous Gentiles attended the worship services in the local synagogue, observed the Jewish law, and believed in God. But some Gentiles, because of their refusal to be circumcised, were called God-fearers. Accordingly, at least four groups of people worshiped together on any given Sabbath: Jews who were born either in dispersion or in Israel, converts to Judaism, God-fearers, and Gentiles who displayed an interest but did not make a commitment.⁷

TOPIC: SYNAGOGUES

Acts 13:15

13:15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and

brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

TOPIC: JEWISH TEACHING, TORAH

the reading of the law and the prophets

From Gill, *Acts*: "The five books of Moses were divided into sections: Genesis was divided into twelve, Exodus into eleven, Leviticus into ten, Numbers into ten, and Deuteronomy into ten, which in all make fifty three sections.

"By reading one on each sabbath [taking two on one day] they read through the whole law in the course of a year. They finished at the close of the Feast of Tabernacles; and that day was called "the rejoicing of the law"; it was a day of rejoicing, that the law was read through.

"The custom of reading the law, the Jews say, began one hundred and seventy years before the time of Christ; though some say the division of the law, into sections, was made by Ezra; and others refer it to Moses himself. It [certainly was done] in the times of Christ and his apostles.

"The reading of the prophets began in this way: when Antiochus Epiphanes burnt the book of the law, and forbade the reading of it, the Jews in [its place] selected some passages out of the prophets, which they thought came nearest in words and sense to the sections of the law, and read them in their stead.

When the reading of the law was restored again [by the Maccabees], they still continued the reading of the prophetic sections; and the section for the day was called "the dismission", because usually the people were dismissed upon it, unless anyone stood up, and preached or expounded the word of God unto the people: hence the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue to Paul and Barnabas."

READ Luke 4:14-21

The reading consisted of two lessons from the law and from the prophets, and was in Hebrew. But since the knowledge of that language was

⁷ Baker NT Commentary, *Acts*, Chapter 13

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 6
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

confined to the learned Jews, and there were proselytes present, it would have been interpreted, verse by verse in the case of the law, and three verses at a time in the case of the prophets.⁸

sent to them

Two chance strangers would scarcely have been thus singled out. It must have become known in the Jewish quarter that the newcomers were Rabbis with a message which they desired to communicate. None the less, the invitation is an interesting illustration of the national and religious unity which bound the Jewish people together throughout the world.⁹

[It is likely] that they had already been some days in Pisidian Antioch, and had already taught the people, and were thus recognized as teachers. The curiosity of the members of the synagogue would be aroused to know what new doctrine this was which these strangers came from such a distance to proclaim.¹⁰

word of exhortation for the people

Literally, “if there is among you any word of exhortation for the people.” It is a condition of the first class and assumed to be true, thus it is a polite invitation.¹¹

Acts 13:16

13:16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience.

Paul stood up

The usual Jewish practice was for the speaker to sit (Luke 6:20), but the Greek and Roman custom was to stand; here the population was largely Roman, so that may be why Paul stood.

⁸ Furneaux, Acts 13

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Gloag, Acts 13

¹¹ Robertson, Acts 13

beckoning with his hand

A gesture to bring about quiet and order. Similar to that used by Peter (Acts 12:17) and Paul, again, (Acts 21:40) on the steps of the tower of Antonia.

Acts 12:16, 17, “But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, **beckoning unto them with the hand** to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.”

Acts 21:40, “And when he [the chief captain of the fortress] had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,”

Men of Israel

Paul always had great concern for his Jewish brothers, that they would be saved.

READ Romans 11:1-15 and Romans 9:1-5.

you that fear God

The “God-fearers” would have been Gentiles, not included in the title “men of Israel”, including both proselytes and other interested Gentiles. Note in verse 43 the reference to “religious proselytes” of the congregation.

TOPIC: PROSELYTES

TOPIC: JEWISH SYSTEM

Review the following topics:

- Paul, Education
- Jewish Teaching, Sabbath
- Jewish Teaching, Categories of Work
- Talmud, Shabbat
- Talmud, Origins
- Talmud, Structure

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 7
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

give audience

"Pay attention ..." "Now hear this" (**akousate**)

Acts 13:17

13:17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm he brought them out of it.

In verses 17-22, Paul reviews the "five pillars" of Judaism. ¹²

1. Their relationship to God is expressed by the words *the people of this God Israel*. Te God Israel was the true God, all other gods were false.
2. Next, the result of the relationship was due to divine choice. God chose Abraham, based on God's desire to bring redemption to mankind; the choice was not a matter of Abraham's character, but God's sovereign will.
3. The *uplifted arm* is the symbol of God's power (Exo. 6:6; Psalm 136:11,12) and points to redemption.
4. Accompanying God's redemption from the old land (Egypt) was His appointment to the new land (Canaan).
5. Finally, verses 21 and 22 focus on Israel's king. All of this history is regarded as preparation for the Messiah.

this people of Israel

This statement would draw the attention of the Gentiles present, to the basic fact of the Jews existence as a people of God.

The Israelites did not choose God, but God chose them. God brought them out of Egypt, God led them in the wilderness, God destroyed the nations before them, God gave them Saul, God gave them David, God raised up a Savior for them, God raised Him from the dead.

exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers

Probably a reference to the fact that the Lord caused Joseph to be advanced to a place second to the king, and all of Jacob's family to occupy a prominent place in Egypt.

with a high arm he brought them out of it.

This is an expression of God's great power.

(**meta bracino~ uylou**) A vivid picture from the Septuagint Greek of **Exodus 6:1, 6** (READ) and other passages.

Acts 13:18

13:18 And about the time of forty years he suffered their manners in the wilderness.

forty years

...from the time they left Egypt until the people entered the land of Canaan

suffered their manners in the wilderness

"Suffered" is **etropoforisen**, first aorist active indicative of (**tropoforow**), "to bear with another's moods", "to tolerate someone's behavior". Hence, God "tolerated the behavior" of the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness.

An interesting variant reading in some manuscripts is **etrofoforisen** (note the **f** in the place of **p** in the fifth letter of the word). This word means "to nurse" or "to nurture", so the reading would be, "for forty years he nurtured them in the wilderness". Furneaux prefers the word "sustained" in this verse.

The meanings are very different, between these two Greek words, but either accurately describes something of the relationship of God with the people in the wilderness.

Acts 13:19

13:19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

¹² McCalley, Acts 13:16-22

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 8
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

seven nations in the land of Canaan

Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Gergashites. The term "Seven Nations" is what they are often called in Jewish writings.

It is not as though they were utterly destroyed, or everyone of them put to death, or driven out, for some remained to be thorns in the sides of the Israelites; yet they were so wasted and conquered,

that they could never recover any more: he divided their land to them; every tribe had its portion of it assigned, by lot.

Joshua 14:1-5, And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.

By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.

For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.

For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.

As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

Acts 13:20

13:20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

"All this took about 450 years, And after than he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet." ¹³

¹³ ESV, Acts 13:20

Notice that this interpreting of the Greek changes the time frame of the 450 years.

This is a most difficult passage, and has exercised all the ingenuity of chronologists, down to the present time. The ancient versions agree with the present Greek text. The difficulty has been to reconcile it with what is said in 1 Kings 6:1.

14 Most of the commentators listed in the bibliography have extended comments on the subject of the so-called time discrepancies.

The Jews in the synagogue would have been well acquainted with the period of the Judges, e.g. Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, and Eli.

"Here is another testimony of the infinite goodness of God toward the Jews, in that he pardoned so many backslidings in them." ¹⁵

until Samuel the prophet

He was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets; he selected the first king (Saul) under God's guidance.

Acts 13:21

13:21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

14 Barnes, Acts 13:20, "1 Kings 6:1, And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel ... he began to build the house of the Lord."

Now if to the 40 years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness there be added the 450 said in Acts to have been passed under the administration of the judges, and about 17 years of the time of Joshua, 40 years for Samuel and the reign of Saul together, and 40 years for the reign of David, and three years of Solomon before he began to build the temple, the sum will be 590 years, a period greater by 110 years than that mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1.

¹⁵ Calvin, Acts

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 9
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

they desired a king

Calvin, "This change was all one as if they would quite and manifestly overthrow the government which he had appointed, whereof God himself complained in Samuel, (1 Sam. 8:5, 7.) But the stability of the election saved them from being punished as such madness did deserve ; yea, the wicked and unlawful desire of the people was to God a new and incredible occasion to erect the kingdom whence Christ should after ward come. For how is it that the scepter came to the tribe of Judah, save only because the people were desirous to have a king ? Assuredly the people dealt wickedly ; but God, who knoweth how to use evil things well, turned that offence into safety. Whereas Saul was thrown down from the kingdom, it served to reprove the fault of the people, (1 Sam. 15:28,) but immediately when the kingdom is established in David's family the prophecy of Jacob was verified, (Gen. 49:10)." ¹⁶

1 SAM. 8:5-7

"And said unto him, Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

1 SAM. 15:28

But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for (A) you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.

"As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.

"So Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has

given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

"Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

Acts 13:22

13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

And when he had removed him

Saul died (in a battle with the Philistines, 1 Sam. 31:1-6. In fact, he took his own life; being badly wounded he fell on his sword.).

David became king, but we see from this statement that it was Jehovah who had removed Saul, showing further His direction of men's affairs, in spite of human frailty. When Saul rejected God's instructions and placed himself above the law, God rejected him.

"Remove" is the aor. act. part. of **meqisthmi**, "to remove from office; to transfer; to set aside". It is notable that Paul was using language that did not show King Saul in a good light; Paul was a member of the tribe of Benjamin, too, and would naturally have been reticent to diminish King Saul's stature, if the Lord had not influenced his speech.

1 SAM. 15:23 (NIV)

For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.

This verb occurs in Luke 16:4, about the removal from office of the unjust steward.

he raised up unto them David to be their king

Here Paul begins a rather long statement which is aimed to show how it was always God's intention to bring the Messiah into the world through the tribe of Judah, the seed of David.

¹⁶ Calvin, Acts 13:21.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 10
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart

This is *not* a quotation from the Old Testament, "as they might be thought to be from the manner in which they are produced, they being cited as a testimony delivered by the Lord."¹⁷

Rather it is a composite made up from Psalm 89:20, "I have found David my servant", and from Samuel's statement to Saul in 1 Sam. 13:14, "the Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart."

There is an interesting parallel in the letter of Clements to the Corinthians, chapter 18: "But what shall we say concerning David, to whom such testimony was borne, and of whom God said, "I have found a man after Mine own heart, David the son of Jesse; and in everlasting mercy have I anointed him?" This gives us rather firm evidence that the Acts was known in Rome before the end of the first century.¹⁸

Acts 13:23

13:23 Of this man's seed has God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus:

Of this man's seed

"From this man's offspring..."

The historical review stops with David, although the lineage of Jesus can be traced both through Joseph and Mary back to David. The mention of David opened the way to introduce the story of Jesus.

The Grace Notes topic on the Genealogy of Jesus Christ is an excellent reference. Developed by Mark Perkins, a Bible church pastor in Colorado, the document provides details from the Bible on all the descendants of David, both through Joseph's line and Mary's line, who were Jesus' forbears.

¹⁷ Gill, Acts 13:22

¹⁸ Furneaux, Acts 13:22

TOPIC: GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

Paul's message here is very similar to Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2.

See also Matthew chapter 1.

according to His promise

Refers to all of the Messianic promises in general, made to the Jews by the prophets. God sent Christ because He had promised to do so. See promises in 2 Sam. 7:2; Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1,10; Jer. 23:5ff; Zechariah 3:8.

These promises were well known among the Jews, even non-Christian Jews called the Messiah the "Son of David."

MATT. 22:41,42

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto him, The son of David."

Acts 13:24

13:24 When John had first preached, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

When John had first preached before his coming

John the Baptist preached and prepared the way for Christ, before Christ entered into his public ministry. Literally "John heralded beforehand" (**prokhrussw**).

TOPIC: PREACHING

We can take it that John the Baptist was fairly well known among religious Jews and proselytes. Recall that Peter referred to him in his message to Cornelius and his family. Disciples of John the Baptist lived in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6). John's message was to all Israel: Pharisees, Sadducees, crowds of people, tax collectors, soldiers, and even Herod Antipas (Matt. 3:7-12; Luke 3:7-20).

the baptism of repentance

This is the phrase used of John's preaching in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 11
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

MARK 1:4

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Gloag: "He not only administered the ordinance of baptism, but he preached the doctrine of it, opened the nature and design of it, and required repentance and fruits meet for it, in those who came to have it administered to them: for which reason it is called the baptism of repentance; and this he did publicly before all the people, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, came unto him." ¹⁹

Baker Commentary: "When John preached the message of repentance and encountered a receptive audience, he baptized the people. His baptism differed from the washings of the Jews, for repentance from sin was a prerequisite to the rite of baptism." ²⁰

TOPIC: REPENTANCE

TOPIC: BAPTISM

Legalism

Introduction

God's plan is a grace plan. God the Father does the work, man receives the benefit. God receives the glory for His own works; man receives no glory.

The greatest distortion to grace is religious legalism!

Religion and legalism are Satan's ace and king of trump or the primary means by which he blinds the minds of those who seek Christ and which are included in Ephesians 4:14 as part of "...every wind of doctrine, sleight of men, cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." By these means, Satan tries to disrupt the plan of God and blind people to grace principles.

¹⁹ Gloag, Acts 13:24

²⁰ Baker, Acts 13:24

I use the word "religion" in a strict sense here, not in the general sense of "the service or worship of God." In the general sense, of course, Christianity could be viewed as a religion. But most religion is legalistic, and I want to distinguish the Christian way of life from other religious practice. So the definition many Bible teachers use is:

Religion is any system in which man by his own efforts tries to earn the approval of God.

Furthermore, the definition for legalism in this paper has to do only with religious legalism, so:

Legalism is a religious system that teaches that a person can do something to earn or merit salvation or blessing from God.

The purpose of this article is to help you identify religious legalism in all of its forms. The article will define and illustrate the concept of legalism, and show you how to distinguish legalism from grace thinking and activities. There are also numerous references to Bible teaching on legalism, particularly from the epistle to the Galatians, where the Jews had a very difficult time reconciling law and grace.

It is very important that you understand the doctrine of grace also. Grace is an extensive Bible category. The majority of the blessings and privileges of the Christian life depend on knowing and using grace principles. So it's vital that you master the subject.

To understand these concepts clearly, you should also study some of the other topics which are related to legalism, especially grace.

Some categorical studies which you can request from Grace Notes are: The Barrier; Circumcision; Confession of Sin; Grace; Judgment, Justice, and Judging; Satan; Spirituality.

Defining Legalism

The standard (Webster's New Collegiate) definition for legalism is: *strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code.*

This definition does not seem very clear. What is, after all, excessive conformity to the law? I suppose it would be excessive to insist on driving 55 mph on the interstate when people are stacked

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 12
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

up behind you wanting to go 70 mph. Legalism on the highway is sometimes dangerous.

But, strict obedience to God's laws is not wrong. In fact, failure to obey is sin. Also, you can certainly decide to set a high standard for yourself in some area, based on your understanding of the obligations of the Christian life. This is not wrong, and it is not legalism by our previous definition of religious legalism, even though it might be strict conformance. It is legalism, however, to think that by maintaining high standards you are somehow doing something to merit salvation or to earn blessings or rewards.

For example, your view of the moral code of Rom. 14:21 may lead you to adopt abstinence from alcohol as a standard, out of your regard for weaker brethren who might be caused to stumble. This would certainly be a strict and legal conformity; but it's not legalism, because you are not trying to earn points with God by your actions. Someone else may consider this excessive, but it is none of their business. It is not wrong for you to set high standards for yourself, and neither is it religious legalism. In fact, quite often what a grace believer calls legalistic is really someone else setting high standards for himself.

A stricter general definition of legalism is found in the Oxford English Dictionary: *The principles of those who hold a theological position of adhering to the Law as opposed to the Gospel; the doctrine of justification by works, or teaching which savors of that doctrine.*

Romans 4:4,5 states the case succinctly, "Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

And Romans 11:6 is clear, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Our human system of work and reward is like this: I work for you and you pay me. This is obviously legitimate, it is the way commerce works under divine institutions and free enterprise.

But the religious legalist is convinced that God works by the same system or at least he hopes so. He says: I work for God and God rewards me by saving me and blessing me in some way.

That is not how God operates. He has no need or desire for our works; in fact, our works are offensive to Him. Isa. 64:6, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..." If I try to impress God with my works, He discards them as filthy rags.

That is why we say that religious legalism, which tries to promote a works approach to God, is a *"system that teaches that a person can do something to earn or merit salvation or blessing from God."*

The word legalism also refers to any merit system which operates by works, by which a person tries to please God, or to assist God, or to glorify God by human power.

Religious legalism also refers to any system of religious bondage imposed on someone by another individual, or by an organization, that attempts to make that person a practitioner of legalism. Bullying tactics are often used: "Unless you accept our point of view, you are not one of us!" Ostracism is a very powerful persuader of novice Christians.

So, while it is not legalism to have high standards, it is legalism to try to impose those standards on others as a system of salvation or spirituality.

The word grace is used in the Bible to refer to all that God is free to do for mankind because of the work that has already been performed for us by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Grace means that man has received from God that which he has not earned or deserved. Nothing that we are, and nothing that we can do, is enough to qualify us for anything that the Lord has to give us. In fact, our works cause us to be arrogant in the presence of God, something He will not tolerate.

Read Romans 2:17-23, A Portrait of a Boaster

Read Romans 4:1-6, "But Not Before God..."

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 13
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

Systems of Legalism

There are four principal spiritual transactions in which works are not accepted by God: salvation, spirituality, maturity and reward.

Legalism in Salvation

There are many religious systems which teach salvation by works, or which try to mix works with faith, such as:

- Believe + keep the Law of Moses
- Believe + be circumcised
- Believe + water baptism
- Believe + confess your sins
- Believe + give up your bad habits and fully surrender
- Believe + make a public display or have great sorrow of a show of tears
- Believe + church membership

The Gospel is believe in Jesus Christ plus nothing else!

Legalism in Christian Living

Here are some types of religious legalism imposed on Christians:

Taboos: Thinking one is spiritual because he abstains from certain things or follows a certain system of dos and don'ts.

Imitating Personalities: The idea that living the Christian life is conformity in dress, mannerisms, speech, etc., with those who seem spiritual.

Relative Righteousness: Your sins are worse than mine, therefore I am more spiritual. I am spiritual and you are carnal.

Ecstasies: Spirituality by speaking in tongues, groaning, getting in a trance, fainting is required.

Asceticism: Spirituality by self-sacrifice or extreme self denial; giving up normal activities or even necessities in the mistaken notion that God is impressed.

Ritual: The idea that one is spiritual because he goes through various forms of ceremony or ritual. In the Apostle's day, the Jews promoted circumcision as necessary to the Christian walk.

These days, baptism or one of the other sacraments is promoted as being necessary to salvation.

Confusing Means with Results: The idea that you are spiritual if you are faithful in praying, giving, witnessing, attending church and so forth. But -these legitimate activities are a result of Christian growth and the filling of the Holy Spirit. They are not the means for spirituality or growth in Christ. It is important to distinguish this difference.

The grace principle is this: when you are in fellowship, occupied with Christ, and controlled by the Holy Spirit, all of your activities bring eternal reward like gold, silver and precious stones. You are producing divine good and the spiritual power for your efforts comes from God as a grace provision.

When you are out of fellowship (sin not confessed), you are occupied with yourself, you control yourself, everything is chaos. Even with your good works you are only producing human good like wood, hay and stubble. There is no spiritual power supporting your efforts and there is no reward for them in heaven.

Obedience to God's word is not legalism. Remember the definition. Everything you do has the potential for reward in heaven, under the right circumstances.

But the legalist thinks that the good works he does for God will not only keep him in fellowship and walking with the Lord but will also make him more spiritual and a great Christian.

Characteristics of the Weaker Brother - Romans 14

[Please read Romans chapter 14 before going through the discussion in this section.]

Romans 14 has a splendid description of the characteristics of a legalistic person who is called the weaker brother. This is a great passage about how to think grace toward someone who does something obnoxious or unspiritual. Remember, we all have areas of weakness. You may be the stronger believer in some of your areas of strength and a weaker brother in areas of weakness. The

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 14
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

idea in both cases is to avoid legalism and judgmentalism.

The strong believer in Romans 14 is mature, oriented to grace, the plan of God, occupied with Christ and operates in fellowship most of the time under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The weaker brother is disoriented to grace, especially in the area of spirituality and practices one or more forms of legalism. He is not comfortable unless he is judging the stronger believer in some gray area of behavior. The weaker brother has one or more of the following characteristics:

- The weaker brother is strong on scruples, but not well informed about doctrine or divine viewpoint.
- The weaker brother operates on criteria of feelings, emotions, traditions, experiences, background, instead of Bible truth.
- The weaker brother operates in the energy of the flesh, producing human good like wood, hay stubble which he thinks is divine good like gold, silver and precious stones.
- The weaker brother is proud and critical of the strong believer, always judging him.
- The weaker brother sticks his nose into the affairs of others by gossiping, maligning and judging.
- The weaker brother likes to set up a mold and try to squeeze everyone into it, so he is a bully.
- The weaker brother has a guilt complex, so he is emotionally unstable; he is sensitive and demands attention; he is full of self pity and lusts for approbation in his sin nature.
- The weaker brother is jealous of others and tries to discredit them; he nit picks and condemns the activities and projects of others.

Note: The weaker brother is weak because he resists grace doctrines. He can recover quickly by confessing sin, being controlled by the Holy Spirit and pursuing a program of intake of Bible truth which will make him spiritually strong.

Illustration from Galatians

It is important that you read the entire epistle to the Galatians prior to reading this outline review of legalism in the Galatian church. The sequence of events was:

1. The Galatian believers came under the influence of Judaistic legalism from the circumcision crowd, that is, Christian Jews who still followed Jewish practices.
2. They took themselves out from under the grace principle and put themselves under the Law.
3. They soon adopted a practice of observing the days, months, times and years.
4. This influenced their appreciation of their teacher and turned the Apostle Paul into an enemy.
5. Their growth process was stopped and Christ was not formed in them, so they were not growing into maturity.
6. As a result of slowed growth and the absence of maturity, bona fide production by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit was curtailed and their only production was a false production expressed as lusts of the flesh.
7. Along with this pseudo production went many other factors:
 - The glory-seeking concept of 5:26
 - The practice of straightening everyone else out, 6:1
 - The concept of weariness with actual doctrinal spiritual production, 6:2-6
 - The program of impressing others, peers, subordinates or superiors, 6:11-13
 - The idea that man gets the glory, God is left out, the antithesis of grace, 6:14,15

The principles to be derived from the example of the Galatian church are listed below:

1. Legalism is a result of a process of turning away from the truth. It is therefore a deliberate choice or (volitional).

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 15
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

2. The type of legalism which a person follows is often related to some kind of background exposure, practice or principle. A person's culture and upbringing will determine what type of religion he follows. Galatians deals with religious legalism which came out of Jewish law and practice.
3. Legalism always has a pseudo content or, another gospel of a different kind. Gal. 1:6.
4. Once legalism begins to operate in a believer's life, he becomes suspicious of another person's motives, methods and message. Gal. 1:10-12.
5. A mature Christian who has been in a legalistic religion can spot legalism a mile away. Paul was at the top of Judaism before his conversion. Gal. 1:13,14.
6. Legalism sometimes uses techniques of infiltration or spying to gather information, while operating under a cloak of respectability. The legalist will bide his time until it suits his purpose to act. Gal. 2:1-4.
7. When legalists are met with truth, in terms of content and procedure, it crumbles and is unable to fulfill its objectives. Strong teaching keeps legalists from getting their campaigns launched. Gal. 2:5-9.
8. When legalists lose a battle on one front, they will regroup and form another base of operations on another front. When legalists cannot get a grasp on a person when he is in the company of strong believers, they will concentrate on him when he is standing alone.
9. Legalism is often seen in leadership before it is seen in the congregation. And when a leader gets involved in legalism, he influences others to go with him. This happens often when a project is going sour and the leader is desperate for support. Example: When there is financial trouble, there is a great temptation to get away from principles of grace giving.
10. The content of legalism is often something that has a bona fide function in some other context. In the Galatian churches, legalism was a distortion of the Law. The Law has a real and bona fide function, to bring us to Christ, and legalism distorted it. Other examples: Legalism takes the doctrine of separation and makes it the doctrine of spirituality; it takes the doctrine of baptism and makes it the doctrine of church membership.
- The term bondage in Gal. 5:1 means the slavery to the principles and ways of regular human living. This is not the idea of degraded lasciviousness or debauchery. The Law was bona fide and circumcision was bona fide. But these were distorted by legalists to that they became the master of the person instead of his tools.
11. The legalistic person has been bewitched. This term means to have evil brought upon you by vain praise. Legalism appeals to a person's lust for approbation and tries to drag him into legalism to satisfy it. Gal. 3:1-3.
- The person in legalism is described as foolish, meaning not understanding. Legalism is one of the greatest robbers of Christian benefits; it robs people of their understanding of the word of God and all of the benefits of the grace life.
12. The legalist does not learn from experience. He has great tenacity; and despite many failures and vain strivings, he still can not see his error. He sees his program not working, so he has to go from one thing to the next, always looking for something better, never satisfied and never satisfying others. Gal. 3:4.
13. The very thing that the legalist puts himself under is that which rises up to smite him. When a Christian puts himself under the taboos of others, he can't measure up. So he puts himself under a church organization and he still can not measure up. The very system that he embraces proves him to be

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 16
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

deficient by always presenting a moving target. Grace is the only system which does not magnify the believer's deficiencies.

GRACE TO YOU, AND PEACE...

Preaching

DEFINITION AND ETYMOLOGY

The word "preach" is found in many places in the New Testament (KJV); however, it has been translated from several different Greek words. For example, in 1 Cor. 1:17, the phrase "preach the Gospel" comes from *eūaggel izw* (**euangelidzo**); while in 1:18 we see the phrase "the preaching of the cross", which is 'ο λογος γαρ 'ο του σταυρου. You can see that the translators took some liberties with their use of the word "preach".

The Greek verb *khrussw* (**keiruso**) was commonly used in ancient times to refer to public proclamation or public teaching, and there are many NT verses where it is found. A complete listing can be found in a Greek concordance.

The noun *κηρυξ* (**keirux**) refers to the "proclaimer; publisher; messenger" who is making the proclamation. Thus,

1 Tim. 2:7, "Whereunto I (Paul) am ordained a preacher (**keirux**), and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." (Likewise in 2 Tim. 1:11)

In 2 Pet. 2:5, Abraham is called a "preacher (**keirux**) of righteousness".

The word **keirux** was used in several ways in ancient times. The **keirux** was a "publisher", or "herald", in the sense that he would broadcast important news to townspeople. The person making official proclamations or announcements to the public was called **keirux**, a sort of town cryer.

A man assigned to carry messages between enemies on a battlefield was also called **keirux**.

The message of the **keirux** is the *κηρυγμα* (**keirugma**). The **keirugma** is what was given

to the **keirux** to proclaim. The originator of the message may have been a battlefield officer or a public official.

In the Bible, the **keirux** is the preacher, the **keirugma** is his message, and **keiruso** is the act of preaching.

The English word "preaching" would be correct if it were used in its primary etymological sense of "proclaiming before the public", the meaning which is derived from the Latin, *praedicere*. However, the modern use of "delivering a moral discourse or religious message of any kind and in any manner" does not give the meaning of **keirugma**. There is no finger-pointing or arm waving in **keirugma**.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES USING KEIRUGMA

In Matt. 12:41 and Luke 11:32, Jonah's message to the Ninevites is called **keirugma**. Jonah's job was to proclaim God's message of salvation in the Assyrian capital.

1 Cor. 1:17-22, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel (**euangelidzw**): not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

For the preaching (**logos**) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

[Note: to "stop the mouths" of those who are opposed (Titus 1:9-11), the Lord employs preachers to bring an unusual message.]

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness (**morias**) of preaching (**keirugma**) to save them that believe.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 17
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach (**keiruso**) Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

1 Cor. 2:1-10

Titus 1:3

PRINCIPLES OF KEIRUGMA

1. The emphasis of **keirugma** is on the message. Someone in authority, who has something to communicate, gives the message to a messenger, the **keirux**, preacher, who passes the information on to someone else, usually in a public setting. It is expected that there will be attentive hearers who will be receptive to the message and who expect to derive some benefit from the message.
2. The messenger does not proclaim his own viewpoint, his own political opinions, his own grievances. The message is another person's communication. The public proclamation is not the platform for him to expound his own theories, to support his side in a debate, talk about his own projects, or get things off his chest. The **keirux** does not call the people together for an important proclamation, then, instead, lecture them on some private matter not associated with the real message.
3. The Bible teacher gets his **keirugma** from God Himself, as revealed in the Word of God. Correct preaching is done by making the message clear to the people who are listening to the proclamation. Public teaching protects the privacy of the believer. Confining himself to the message, the preacher does not unduly influence the listeners with personality dynamics or bullying techniques. The listener can accept or reject the message in private.

Repentance

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is one of the Bible's most controversial verses; many systems of false religion have been built on it. The most prominent is the concept of baptismal regeneration, the idea that water baptism is required for salvation.

Baptismal regeneration is the most widely taught form of salvation legalism, the idea that a person can actually do something (be baptized) to help save himself.

Any ritual involves human activity, human merit, human *works*. And water baptism is a ritual in which someone is *doing* something.

"Works," whatever they are, are not accepted by God as contributing to a person's salvation.

"For by grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8,9)

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)

"REPENT"

The English word "repent" is from the Latin, *re + poenitere*, meaning "to regret; to be sorry". The Oxford English Dictionary has the following meanings:

1. To affect oneself with contrition as regret for something done or for something inherently wrong, some fault, misconduct, sin, or other offence.
2. To feel contrition, compunction, sorrow, or regret.
3. To change one's mind with regard to past action or conduct through dissatisfaction with it or its results.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 18
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

You can see that peoples' opinions of what is required for salvation is colored by which of the above definitions they chose. That is, if you choose #1 or #2 you could assume that, in order to properly repent, you must feel great sorrow or regret for your sins.

Now, regret can range from a mild regret to a life-threatening sorrow. A mild regret says, "Oh, I see I've been wrong; I'll do it the other way." A severe regret is a raging sorrow which can destroy one emotionally and physically, as from some unintentional action that harms a loved one.

So, a person may feel a tremendous regret about sin: the offense to God, the effect on others, etc. Or, a person may not know enough about sin, or its consequences, to have much regret at all. For many people, the first they hear about sin is in an evangelistic message or Bible class.

For example, someone who grows up in a permissive family in a permissive society may not know that sex outside of marriage is a sin and has very bad consequences. It takes Bible doctrine to know Sin for what it is!

Regret over past sins actually grows as one is edified, as a person gains divine viewpoint and sees real issues in life. If a believer doesn't learn about forgiveness, confession, and restoration to fellowship, he might build up a tremendous guilt complex about his past. This is why it's such a blessing to know that past sins have been forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Now if "repentance" is "feeling sorry for sin," then how sorry do you have to feel? Mild sorrow or raging sorrow? And how do you demonstrate this sorrow to God? These thoughts lead people into such extremes as asceticism and self-punishment of one kind or another great attempts to impress God, and other people, with the extent of one's contrition.

Another question arises from this, "Will I have to wait until the end of my life, or until I face

God, to know whether my sorrow has been enough?

And, "What about my lack of knowledge of sins? How many sins are there that I don't even know about? How much sorrow must I have about each type and variety? Must I feel as sorry for gossip as I would for murder?"

The question here, of course, is "works." Can repentance be misconstrued to support a "works" doctrine? Yes it can, ***if feeling sorry is made a necessary constituent of salvation.*** Just as in all forms of legalism, there is great potential here for bullying by clergy and "informed" laymen.

Definition #3, on the other hand, taken alone, indicates that repentance can be just a mental change that does not necessarily involve emotional sorrow.

To resolve these vocabulary problems, the Greek word must be studied.

The Greek for "repent" is METANOEW, which means "to change the mind; to rethink something." The cognate noun METANOIA, Rom 2:4, means "a change of mind; a conversion; a turning away." Divine viewpoint changes every bit of human viewpoint you've learned.

There is no emotion or feeling involved in this activity. Therefore, if we are going to use the English word "repent" to translate METANOEW, we must be certain that the English Definition #3 (above) is meant!

METANOEW, as an active verb, needs to have an object in context. One must change one's mind about something. You might change your mind because of an honest mistake. You bought a Ferrari and now you can't pay for it. Or, you may receive some education, and that changes your thinking about many things.

Repentance is a theological concept we study to explain the mechanics which occur at salvation.

If you have accepted Christ as Savior, at some point you changed your thinking about your sin, your relationship to God, and about the work of Christ for salvation.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 19
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

Likewise, if you have studied the Bible as a Christian, the Word of God has led you to change your mind about many things.

That you put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)

When you decide to commit a sin, you are certainly not thinking divine viewpoint. When you are convicted by the Word of God, and by the Holy Spirit, you have an opportunity to adjust your thinking to God's point of view. This leads to your confession, "expressing the same viewpoint" as God. Before you confess your sin, you first undergo a change of thinking about the sin. METANOEW precedes HOMOLOGEW.

Repentance is *not* a turning away from sin in order to accomplish salvation. A person *is* guilty of sin; he *does* need forgiveness; and he *should* stop sinning. But, victory over sin is a process of the Christian life.

An unbeliever cannot have victory over sin. A person can turn over a new leaf, clean up in a few surface areas, spruce up the facade a little. But who would a person be satisfying. One might fool himself and others that he'd done enough if he didn't have a very good idea of what God's demands actually are.

Sin is too pervasive; there are too many sins. Mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, open and public sins. You can't turn away from all your sins, even temporarily.

You can see what a vicious circle the legalist is in, the one who thinks he can lose his salvation. If it were possible to lose salvation, assuming someone were successful in earning it in the first place, salvation could never be maintained.

Let's compare Acts 2:38 and Acts 16:31, in which the Philippian jailer is told simply to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

We can see that "believe" (PISTEUW) and "repent" (METANOEW) are virtually synonymous in their application.

- Both require focusing one's attention on Christ.
- Both require positive volition to the Gospel.
- Both require acceptance of divine viewpoint regarding Christ and His work on the Cross.
- Both mean that you have information that you did not have before and that you accept a point of view.
- Both mental attitudes are non-meritorious, that is, neither involves any sort of works.

The Jew, however, is going to have a more wrenching experience as he turns from his religion to Christ. "Repentance" means that, however much he loves his religion and follows his religious practices, he no longer trusts in the works of his religion to save him. He trusts Christ.

The Philippian jailer has no such hold over his mind. He accepts Christ readily, with no religious reservations. He is simply a man in trouble grasping at a straw which turns out to be a lifeboat.

When witnessing, you only give information, you do not try to get the unbeliever to "repent." That is the function of God the Holy Spirit using the Gospel information you have provided. God the Holy Spirit will encourage people to change their mind about Christ. Whether a person actually does repent depends on that person's volition when hearing the Gospel message.

REGRET IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is a Greek word for "regret," METAMELOMAI, which should always be translated "regret," never "repent," because it has an emotional connotation. It means to feel sorry for something you have done.

It is used to express regret for a previous action (Matt. 21:29).

It describes the attitude of Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3) He regretted what he had done to our

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 20
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

Lord, but he never repented, he never believed in our Lord for salvation.

It is used for God having no regrets about saving people and giving spiritual gifts in the Church Age, (Rom. 11:29).

Likewise, the Father has no regrets regarding the appointment of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, (Heb. 7:21).

ILLUSTRATIONS OF REPENTANCE

Exo. 13:17. The Jews were not mentally prepared to fight for their freedom. God knew they would change their minds, say that slavery is better, and attempt to go back to Egypt, if they saw war coming. So here repentance means to come up to a new set of facts, be influenced by these facts rationally, and then to retreat.

Jer. 8:3-6, speaking of Judah. When you fail, you don't quit or give up. You get up and move on. When a person doesn't repent with regard to salvation (unbeliever), or Bible doctrine (believer), then your lifestyle is out of control due to evil in your life.

BELIEVING IN CHRIST: REPENTANCE FOR SALVATION

Salvation repentance is that change of mind which occurs when a person understands and believes the Gospel.

This is the principle of common grace, in which the Holy Spirit takes the message of the witness and makes it a reality in the mind of the unbeliever.

An unbeliever cannot understand spiritual phenomena, 1 Cor. 2:14.

Therefore the Holy Spirit acts to bring about perception of the Gospel, John 16:8-11; 2 Tim. 2:25.

After understanding the issues of the Gospel, a positive volition expresses itself in a change of mental attitude: faith in Christ. Faith in Christ and repentance are two sides of the same coin. A change in mental attitude about the person and work of Christ equals repentance.

Repentance results in faith in Jesus Christ, salvation adjustment to the justice of God. And it is at the moment of repentance that God the Father provides the whole Salvation package to the new believer.

TOPIC: SALVATION DOCTRINES

Matt. 1:14-15 teaches that first you change your mind about Christ and then you believe. Matt. 12:41; Luke 13:2-3, 5; 15:7,10; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:17.

2 Pet. 3:9, God is "not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Growth in the Christian life demands repentance toward human good, Heb 6:1.

Human good is good works produced by any person, Christian or non-Christian, apart from the filling and control of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

An unbeliever, of course, does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and cannot be filled with the Spirit. All good produced by an unbeliever is categorized as human good.

A Christian is, at any moment, either filled with the Holy Spirit (spiritual) or not filled with the Spirit (carnal).

The good produced by a spiritual believer is divine good (gold, silver, precious stones). The good produced by a carnal believer is human good (wood, hay, stubble).

- Human good is dead to the plan and policy of God, Gen. 2:17.
- Human good is linked with arrogance and produces boasting, Eph. 2:9; Rom. 4:2.
- Human good is never acceptable to God, Isaiah 64:6.
- Human good will not save man, Eph 2:8-9.
- An unbeliever's human good will be judged, Rev. 20:12-15.
- The believer's human good will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11-16; Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:10.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 21
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

A change of attitude about sin is taught in Rev. 2:5, 16, 22.

A change of attitude toward Bible truth is the basis for recovery from backsliding, Rom 2:5; Rev 3:19.

WHEN GOD REPENTS

In the Bible, God is said to "repent" of things. Gen. 6:6; Exo. 32:11-14; 1 Sam. 15:35; Psalm 90:11-13; Jer. 25:3,13.

But God is immutable and does not change. He does not change His mind. Therefore, these passages ascribe to God a human characteristic, in order to explain or describe God's judgment in a human frame of references. This is an anthropopathism.

An anthropopathism ascribes to God a human characteristic He does not possess, but explains divine policy in terms of human frame of reference.

Baptism

INTRODUCTION

The word "baptize" (from the Greek baptidzo) means "to identify" or "to be made one with". In early Greek, the word had both religious and secular meanings. In general, it refers to the act of identifying one thing with another thing in such a way that its nature or character is changed, or it represents the idea that a real change has already taken place.

As a reference to identification, "baptize" means to place a person (or thing) into a new environment, or into union with some one or something else, so as to alter his (its) condition or relationship to the previous environment.

There are seven types of baptism mentioned in the Bible. Four of these are real baptisms and three are ritual baptisms.

Real Baptisms

- The Baptism of Moses
- The Baptism of the Cross (or Cup)
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- The Baptism of Fire

Ritual Baptisms

- The Baptism of John
- The Baptism of Jesus
- The Baptism of the Christian Believer

These seven baptisms are described in the sections below.

REAL BAPTISMS

A baptism is called "real" if it involves actually identifying a person with something or someone.

THE BAPTISM OF MOSES

The baptism of Moses was a double identification, the children of Israel are identified both with Moses and with the cloud (Jesus Christ) as they passed through the Red Sea. There was no water involved (remember, they went through the sea on dry land when the waters were parted). 1 Cor. 10:1,2.

THE BAPTISM OF THE CROSS (OR CUP)

Jesus Christ "drank" the Cup filled with our sins. Another way of expressing it is that all the sins of the world were put into one cup and poured out on Christ while He was on the Cross. God the Father judged our sins while they were on Christ. Christ was identified with our sin and He bore our sins on the cross. He was made sin for us. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.

In Matt. 20:22 Jesus speaks of the cup he is to drink as he makes a reply to the mother of Zebedee's children. In Matt. 26:39, He prays to the Father to "let this cup pass from me". Nevertheless, He determined to drink from the cup, as seen in John 18:11, "the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink from it?"

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a real baptism. When a person accepts Christ as Savior, he is placed into the body of Christ. He is identified as a believer. The mechanics are given in 1 Cor. 12:13.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur in Old Testament times. The first occurrence was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit placed the new believers into the body of Christ.

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 22
ACTS 215, Acts 13:13-24	a Grace Notes study

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the basis for Positional Truth. Believers are placed "in Christ", and in this position have access to many kinds of privileges and blessings. Ephesians 1 has a good description of what it means to have "all blessings in heavenly places in Him."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was prophesied by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16. And it was prophesied by Jesus Christ, John 14:16,17; Acts 1:5.

The implications of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for all believers in the family of God, are given in Gal. 3:26-28.

The principle of retroactive identification with Christ is brought out in Rom. 6:3,4 and Col. 2:12.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience. It is not accompanied by speaking in tongues or any other kind of feeling or behavior. The things that happen to believers at the moment of salvation are accomplished by the Holy Spirit, not by us, and these things are not experiences.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

There is a judgment coming at the 2nd Coming of Christ when all nonbelievers are taken from the earth. They will join the rest of the unbelievers in Torments (Sheol-Hades-Hell) to wait for the Last Judgment (The Great White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20) at the end of the Millennium. This removal of unbelievers for judgment is the baptism of fire.

Fire is a symbol for judgment all throughout the Bible. Examples are the fire which burned the sacrifice on the Hebrew altar, and the fire from God which burned the watered down sacrifices of Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

The doctrine of the baptism of fire is stated in Matt. 3:11,12; Luke 3:16,17; and 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

The Lord Jesus taught several parables regarding the end times when believers and unbelievers will be separated. The believers are to go into the millennium, the unbelievers are "cast off" into fire. These parables are analogies to the baptism of fire.

Wheat and tares - Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.

Good and bad fish - Matt. 13:47-50.

The wise and foolish virgins - Matt. 25:1-13

The sheep and the goats - Matt. 25:31-46

RITUAL BAPTISMS

A baptism is called a ritual baptism, or a ceremonial baptism, when water is used as a symbol for something else. It is a representative identification. The individual is placed in the water, which means, symbolically, that he is identified with that which the water represents.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN - MATT. 3:6-11.

Here the water is symbolic of the Kingdom of God which John was preaching. When a person was baptized by John, he was testifying to his faith in the Messiah and his identification with Christ's kingdom. The new believer was "identified" with the water, but the water represented a spiritual identification.

The phrase "Kingdom of God" is a general term referring to all believers from the time of Adam until the end of the Millennium. At the time of John the Baptist, all believers were pre-Church Age Christians, although many lived on into the Church Age (which began at the Day of Pentecost).

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist, the water was symbolic of God's will in salvation, namely that Jesus would go to the Cross.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Believers' baptism is a symbolic act in which a believer proclaims his Union with Jesus Christ. It represents death to sin, to the old way of life, and resurrection to a new spiritual life in Christ (Rom 6:3,4; Col 2:11-12, Titus 3:5).