

100 BIBLE LESSONS

Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems.

LESSON 22 – CHARISMA

In our last study we stated, *Grace* is defined as *the free, unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving and the ill-deserving*. It has only one channel – Jesus Christ. It is offered to only one kind of person – the humble. It is appropriated by only one means – faith. It has only one administrator or dispenser – the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.

Having made a little study of the word *grace* (Gk. *charis*), we are in a position to understand the word *charisma*, which is simply the word for *grace* (*charis*) with the two letters “m” “a” (“ma) added on. The effect of adding on these two letters is to make a definite specific noun out of a general abstract noun (if you understand those very elemental grammatical phrases). *Grace* is essentially what we call an abstract noun but “*charisma*” is *grace made definite, specific, and effective. It is some particular way or form or operation or manifestation of the grace of God*. You cannot really properly understand what a “*charisma*” is unless you first understand what “*charis*” is. “*Charis*” is *grace*. “*Charisma*” is *grace made specific – made available in a certain way, in a certain form, in a certain operation*. Normally speaking, in the King James Version, “*charisma*” is translated “*gift*,” but in two instances it is translated “*free gift*,” especially emphasizing the association with *grace*. There are actually 17 instances of this word in the New Testament and I believe it would be a good basis just to go through some of these instances and see the kind of associations and use of the word.

The first reference is given in Romans 1:11. The apostle Paul is writing to the Christians at Rome, whom he has never yet seen and he says, “*For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift ...*” The word “*gift*” there is “*charisma*” – “*spiritual*” connects it immediately with the Holy Spirit. Some gift of which the Holy Spirit is the administrator and dispenser through Jesus Christ. Paul is not specific there as to what gift or gifts he had in mind.

Then we go on to Romans 5:15-16 where the word occurs twice. In each of these passages, it is translated “*free gift*.” I’ll read verses 15 and 16. I’ll also read the 17th verse, although the word is not actually used there, and we will then see what is the specific gift that is here spoken of. Let me point out that Paul is contrasting what happened to the human race through the sin of Adam and what is offered to the human race through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is the whole point of this contrast. “*But not as the offense, so also is the free gift (charisma). For if through the offense of one (that is, Adam) many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many*” Let me pause there to point out that Paul writing in Greek, directly lines up grace and grace gifts. He says that the grace of God and the gifts by grace which is by one man (and he emphasizes the channel is only through Jesus Christ) hath abounded unto many. “*And not as it was by*

one that sinned, so is the gift: for judgment (of Adam) was by one to condemnation, but the free gift (through Jesus Christ) is of many offenses unto justification: For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Now, this is a somewhat elaborate, complicated comparison, which is not my purpose to go into in detail, but I want to point out to you that the free gift that Paul speaks about there is "righteousness." It is tremendously significant that the first actual, specified grace gift "charisma" mentioned in the New Testament is the gift of righteousness.

Here again, I find that the majority of professing Christians completely fail to realize that we are offered righteousness as a gift. We cannot earn it. We cannot work for it. We cannot strive to attain to it. We must accept it as a gift. We are made righteous with the righteousness that is not our own. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that "God made Him to be sin for us, who know no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness..." Any other righteousness is on a lower level. The only righteousness that will admit us to heaven is the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ – it is received by faith as a gift. And, here is the first specific "charisma" (specific manifestation of God's grace) in the life of those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. God can't do anything for us until He has made us righteous. The first thing He does when we approach Him is to make us righteous. I think you will agree with me that the majority of Christians have never grasped this fact. In fact, I think you will find that much of our liturgy, and much of our music and our hymns are designed to leave us sin-conscious.

In many cases, we almost feel it is presumptuous to consider ourselves anything but sinful. This is a remarkable fact. I'll tell you the one thing the devil fights against as powerfully as anything else is any person realizing what it is to be made righteous by faith. He'll keep you by any means that he can, in some measure, under condemnation and guilt, and keep you feeling very religious about it too at the same time. The majority of people would feel embarrassed or presumptuous to call themselves righteous, but the reason is because they think they have to earn it. The scripture emphasizes that it is a grace gift – it is a free, unmerited gift. You either receive it as a gift or you just don't have it. So, there are the first two specific instances of "charisma" in Romans 5:15-16 – each time, the "charisma" (gift) is RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Then, we come to the well known verse in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift (free gift – the "charisma") of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Notice again that Paul is drawing a deliberate contrast between WAGES and grace GIFT – wages being the due reward for what you've done. If you work five days a week at a certain fixed salary, at the end of the week you collect your wages, that is the due reward for what you've done. Paul says that the due reward for the sins that we have all committed is death. The wages of sin is death. If you want justice, that's it. You can have it. God is just. But, the alternative to justice is grace – not what you've earned – not what you're good enough for – not what you've worked for – but the free,

unmerited grace gift of God which is *eternal life* in Jesus Christ our Lord. You cannot have it without Jesus Christ.

When you receive Jesus Christ, in Him you receive *eternal life*. We could also glance at Romans 8:10, where we'll see the connection between life and righteousness. "*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*" Life comes in by the Holy Spirit because we are reckoned righteous. God cannot give life to the unrighteous, but, when we receive the gift of righteousness, then we receive the *gift of eternal life*. *Eternal life* comes in on the basis of Christ's righteousness.

Notes adapted from the teaching ministry of Derek Prince. For Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define *grace*.
2. The Greek word *charis* is translated by what English word?
3. The Greek word *charisma* is translated into English by what word(s)?
4. What is the free gift that Paul is describing in Romans 5:17? What does the word *gift* imply? If you had to earn it or pay for it, would it be a gift?
5. In Romans 3:22 what is the righteousness that is being offered? How is it received?
6. How is the great exchange of God's mercy described in 2 Corinthians 5:21?
7. According to Romans 3:23 who has sinned? Does this include you? What are the wages of sin? Do you wish to take your wages?
8. What does John 1:12 say about receiving Jesus Christ?