

LEARNED THE THREE Rs YET?

by John Aldworth

So, you're a Christian. You believe the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ paid for your sin. You know God's forgiveness for all sin – past, present and future -(Col. 2:13) and find yourself "a new creature", saved by the "*washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*" (Titus 3:5).

Hopefully, you are learning to overcome sin by believing you are no longer under law but under grace so that sin no longer has "*dominion*" over you (Rom. 6:14). Perhaps you have also learned that, truly, your old sinful nature was crucified with Christ and that by faith and the help of the Holy Spirit you can put sin to death in your own life.

I also hope you're seeking the "*things above*", the realm to which you as a believer have been raised by grace and thus "*made to sit*" with Christ Jesus in heavenly places (Eph. 2: 6, Col. 3:1).

Growing in Grace

But permit me to ask, have you mastered the Three Rs yet? No, bless your heart, that's not the "reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic" you got to grips with back in primers. No, no. These are vital, basic learning skills for believers who want to grow in grace and become able "*ambassadors*" for the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

If you are a truly saved Christian, almost certainly your desire will be become "*a vessel meet for the Masters use*" (2 Tim. 2:21). If that's your aim then grasping the Three Rs will do much to help you achieve your goal.

Of course, you won't find a verse literally telling you to "study the Three Rs". Nor is there a scripture saying the trio are the three "hot" issues for Christianity today but, rest assured, they are. In fact grasping God's will on these three issues will open the door to "*the riches of the full assurance of understanding ... of the mystery*" that Paul wrote about in Col. 2:2.

Satan will oppose

But beware! Satan will do all that he can to prevent you reaching this point. He much prefers believers "*blown about by every wind of doctrine*" (Eph. 4:14) or "*ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (2 Tim. 3:7). That way he can be sure you won't be "*built up*" in the "*word of His Grace*" (Acts 20:32). That way he can also keep you from the Father, "... *Him who is of power to stablish you according to my (i.e. Paul's) gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the world began ... but now is made manifest...*"(Rom. 16:25-26).

A different gospel

"*Stablish*" means to strengthen and make secure in something. In the verse above that "something" is Paul's gospel and the "*preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery*". Sadly, far from being "stablished" by Paul's gospel most Christians have yet to learn that it is radically different from both the gospel preached by Jesus on earth and the offer of salvation proclaimed by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost.

And today it would be a rare believer indeed who could explain what the "*preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery*" (which means a secret now made manifest) actually is, let alone why it was hid for so long.

Expect a battle

The opportunity now lies before you to grasp these and other truths so clearly they will forever sharpen your sword of witness. Don't let Satan rob you of it. And do expect a battle. Don't be surprised if strange doubts and irrational dislikes arise in your mind even as you read what you are about to learn.

As Jesus said, Satan is the "father of lies" and cannot abide the truth. Above all, he hates the "**now**" word of the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ specifically directed to believers today. Hang in there until you've checked it all out in God's Word, the King James Bible, Authorised Version 1611. Remember the Bereans? They "*sought the scriptures daily to see if these were so*" (Acts 17:11). May I suggest that you do the same?

Not to overstate the case, your decision on these issues will determine whether you understand what God is really doing today or miss out on his purpose for believers living in this hour. As the preacher said, "You're either part of the problem, or part of the solution." You can't be both.

So here are the Three Rs: **Right Bible, Right Division, Right Gospel**

RIGHT BIBLE

We start with the Bible issue because that's where God starts, with His Word. Turn to Genesis 1 and see for yourself how He spoke heaven and earth into being with His Word.

The issue then for you and me is whether we believe God's Word or not. Of course I do, you say. Well, allow me to test you on that. It's often said: "If God's Word says it, I believe it, that settles it". Actually that is too many words. The truth is that that if God's Word says it, that settles it. Whether you believe it or not God's Word is still the truth. That two and two make four is fact; whether you believe it or not it won't add up to anything else. Nor will God's Word be anything other than absolute truth, regardless of the view we may have of it. "*Let God be true but every man a liar*" (Rom. 3:4).

Christ's work undermined

So, why does it matter which Bible you read? Simply because Jesus said "... *scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35). Yet in the "new, modern" bibles that have spread like a rash in recent years scripture has indeed been broken. Words have been changed; in fact many left out. Whole verses and sentences have been dropped, truths obscured and the character and the precious, finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying and rising again for us has been undermined. One ominous NIV omission is leaving out the Lord's words "*Get thee behind me Satan*" in Luke 4:8.

The devil's prayer?

And just look at what the NIV does to the prayer the Lord taught his disciples in Luke 11:2. "*Our Father*" is reduced to Father, the words "*which art in heaven*" are omitted along with "*Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth*" and the very important phrase "*and deliver us from evil*". The mutilated NIV prayer cannot possibly be addressed to the true God since the NIV won't admit that He is in heaven, nor does the NIV want His will done on earth. Since the NIV does not want God to deliver us from evil, one can only conclude that the "Father" addressed in the NIV is actually the "Father of lies", Satan himself. Certainly Satan is not in the highest heaven and certainly he does not want God's will done on earth. Obviously he would not want to deliver anyone from evil, since as the devil, he is evil personified.

Supposedly the new translations are easier to understand. That's because they have been dumbed down, some to fifth grade level. Importantly, the indicators vital to understanding what we as Gentiles (or Jews) are now in God and how we are saved at this time in God's programme of progressive revelation, have been obfuscated or fudged in the "new and improved" bible versions.

The very "time marks" placed by God in the original Greek New Testament text and preserved accurately in the King James Bible are mistranslated, obscured or absent in the New International Version (NIV), New American Standard (NASB), the Good News and many other versions. Even the New King James Bible departs radically from the inerrant, God-preserved text of the good old KJB.

Christ left out of his own gospel

Today's most popular bible, the NIV, leaves out 3000 words in the New Testament alone, some 6000 in the whole bible. Missing are whole chapters and verses. Also cut out are important words, crucial to the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example: in Romans 1:16 in the King James Bible Paul writes that he is not "*ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.*" In the NIV that phrase reads: "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Thus the NIV leaves "Christ" out of his own gospel.

Vital patterns lost

Worst of all the new translations disrupt and obliterate the clear biblical presentation of the dispensations. Dispensations are the different ways God has used to deal with man down the

ages. Thus each dispensation (e.g. Ephesians 3:1-3, “*the dispensation of the grace of God*”) represents a change in the way He runs his household (i.e. mankind).

At least seven such changes are recognised by most dispensationalists and if your bible lacks the clear pointers to them found in the King James Bible then you are robbed of knowing God’s method of salvation and purpose for believers today.

Publishers of modern bibles often employ translators who do not themselves believe important teachings found in God’s Word. Worse still they base their translations on corrupt texts produced by men of past ages who also denied vital truths such as Jesus being God the Son, that He was born of the virgin and that He died for our sins and rose from the dead.

That is why their Satanically inspired new bible versions, particularly the NIV, constantly pull down the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, obliterate the efficacy of the blood He shed for sin and cast doubt on the all sufficiency of grace He provides to save and help lost sinners.

God’s revelation disfigured

What’s more the very pattern of words that undergirds the sweep of progressive truth that God has revealed over time to man is disfigured by the textual corruption and mistranslation in the new bibles.

For example, the KJB uses the word “*dispensation*” consistently to translate the Greek word *oikonomia* in 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10, 3:2 and Colossians 1:25. Translating the same word the NIV uses ‘trust’ in 1 Cor. 9:17, ‘effect’ in Eph. 1:10, ‘administration’ in Eph. 3:2 and ‘commission’ in Col. 1:25, thus denying the reader the God intended connection.

Why, Hebrew speaking Israelis in Jerusalem wouldn’t use the NIV even to line their bird cages! When they want to study the Tenach (Old Testament) in English they go to the only reliable translation in that language – the King James Bible.

To sum it up, the true power of God is found only in His perfectly preserved, infinitely refined, inerrant Word (see Psalm 12:6-7) because that alone is THE TRUTH. Available globally in today’s universal language, English, that TRUTH is the King James Bible. The others simply don’t cut the mustard.

RIGHT DIVISION

Confusion is easy if you treat the Bible as just one book, believing every part is a message written directly to you. Take your instruction from Genesis 6 and could find yourself building a wooden ark the size of a mini liner or Cook Strait ferry in your back yard. Or, if you read Leviticus, taking a lamb, the first of the flock, and slaying it for your sins.

You wouldn’t, I hear you say, because Jesus is the Lamb of God and our sacrifice for sins today and Noah was only told to build an ark because God was going to flood the earth. He promised not do that again, so we don’t need an ark today, you argue.

Changes in God's dealings

Do you know that in making that argument you have just “rightly divided the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15)? What was it you did again? You recognised that what God said at one time regarding his requirements of man differs from what He later said at another time. You saw that one means of sacrifice for sin (Abel's lamb) was later replaced by God with a very different one (Jesus dying on the cross for our sins).

The fact is that at various stages in man's history (and thus also in the Bible narrative) God changes the way He deals with men. Thus God walked and talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden but after Adam's fall walked with him no more but drove him out of the garden to till and work the now weed ridden soil. Clearly what God said to Adam before the fall is vastly different to what He said afterwards and nothing Adam did could bring back his lost state of innocence.

In our time, roughly 6000 years later, there's just as big a difference in what God once did nearly 2000 years ago and what He is doing today. For example, it was no light thing to truly follow Jesus during his earthly ministry and thus qualify for to enter the kingdom of heaven earth He proclaimed was “*at hand*”.

You had to sell all you had, give to the poor, and follow the Master, not knowing where you would sleep that night. You had to do good deeds where you had done bad plus keep the whole law of Moses, all 613 commandments of it. What's more your righteousness had to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees because, unless it did, you would “*in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven*”.

A burden the apostles couldn't bear

What a big ask! The Jews could never do it. So what chance for rebellious, uncircumcised Gentiles such as we? The Apostle Peter in Acts 15:10 said the law of Moses was a burden “*neither we nor our fathers could bear*”. Not much hope then that Gentiles like you and I will ever obey it is there? Yet that is exactly what we must do if we are going to obey to the letter the commands of Jesus found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Tell people today that the teaching and instructions of the Apostle Paul are the “**now**” commands of the Lord Jesus Christ to us today and they say: “Oh, no, the words of Jesus in the Gospels - the ones in red letters in my Bible – they are what we should obey.” Trouble is they haven't thought it through, much less “rightly divided” the “*word of truth*” (Tim. 2:15).

If you think you are really obeying the commands Jesus gave on earth, or that it is possible these days to even do so, then here's a simple test: Look up Luke 12:33 and read the simple instruction: “*Sell that ye have and give alms ...*” Done that yet? If you are obeying the red letter words of Jesus as you say you are, why not? You had better have a good reason for not doing so. And, please, don't spiritualise the meaning away.

Clearly Jesus meant exactly what He said because his 12 disciples fully obeyed Him. He said: “*Come, follow Me*”, remember? The disciples did just that, leaving nets, boats, the business of fishing, tax gathering or political agitation and wives and children too.

Now, is Jesus calling us in this the “*dispensation of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24, Eph. 3:2) in which we live to do the same? Hardly. Rather in 1 Tim. 5:8 the Lord speaks through Paul to us saying: “*If any man provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel*”. And in 1 Cor. 7:10 believers are specifically told not to leave their husbands or wives.

The things that differ

We are commanded in 2 Tim. 2:15 to “*rightly divide the word of truth*”. Right division is taking notice of the changes God makes in his requirements of man and in the terms of His salvation as the Bible story unfolds.

In the gospels Jesus and his 12 apostles preached only unto **Jews** (Matthew 15:24 and Romans 15:8), whereas the “*Gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24), revealed by the Lord through Paul, is for both **Jews** and **Gentiles**. Under it **all men** can be saved by “*grace through faith*” (Eph. 2:8-9) and “*not by works lest any man should boast*”.

By contrast, under the kingdom of heaven on earth gospel preached by Jesus and the 12 during his earthly ministry, both faith and works such as turning from sin and water baptism were required for salvation. Believers saved then were promised resurrection back on earth in the 1000-year, Millennial reign of Christ. It is otherwise for believers saved now, who go to heaven when they leave this life.

Paul warns the Galatians that in turning back to obey rituals of the law such as circumcision they had “*fallen from grace*”.

Today many ministers are adding works of the law, long gone Pentecostal experiences or water baptism to the simple message of salvation by grace. By doing so they are coming under the curse pronounced by Paul in Gal. 1:8-9: “*If any man preach any gospel to you other than that which we have preached let him be ACCURSED.*”

Many are taking commands given by Jesus in His earthly ministry only to the “*lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (see Matthew 10:6, 15:24) and trying to make them their own with disastrous results. Fact is they were never intended for us in the first place.

Yes, right division is the key to clearly understanding, on its own ground, God’s wonderful message of full and free salvation “*by grace through faith*” (Eph. 2:8) – the gospel for today.

RIGHT GOSPEL

Did you know there is more than one gospel in the New Testament? I hope it isn’t a shock to you to learn there are at least three and that two are quite different. What’s more each of them is known by two or more names.

Confused? Don't be. Every distinction in the Bible, the King James Bible, of course, whether of name, time or description, is for a reason. Mark carefully what the differences God's word in the KJB Authorised Version 1611 make plain and they will open up a wealth of meaning.

Two very different gospels

For example, look at Galatians 2:7-9 where we read this part of God's word to us Gentiles through Paul:

*"But contrariwise when they saw that the gospel of the **uncircumcision** was committed unto me as the gospel of the **circumcision** was to Peter;
(For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the **circumcision**, the same was mighty in me toward the **Gentiles**);
And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars saw the **grace** that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the **heathen** and they to the **circumcision**."*

Do you see it? Right here are two gospels given to two different apostles for two different peoples, Jews and Gentiles. First up there is the **gospel** of the **uncircumcision** given to Paul. This is the **gospel** of the grace of God (as it is called in Acts 20:24, elsewhere called by Paul "**my gospel**" and "**the gospel I preach among the Gentiles**"). Second, is the **gospel** of the **circumcision** committed unto Peter.

Verses 8 and 9 clearly teach, as other scriptures confirm, that Christ was "**mighty**" in Paul as he took this **gospel** of the **uncircumcision** to the Gentiles. Now the same Christ also "**wrought effectually**" in Peter the apostle to the circumcision, that is the Jews. Mark well, though, that Peter has a **different** gospel, the **gospel** of the **circumcision**.

In Acts chapters two and three we see Peter preaching this gospel to the Jews (and only to the Jews), the heart of which is to do with God having raised up Christ to sit on David's throne and rule Israel (Acts 2:30, 36). This gospel is in a continuation of the **gospel of the kingdom** (that is the kingdom of heaven or God on earth) as proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus and the twelve in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The 'down to earth' gospel

Matthew 4:17 shows us Jesus clearly proclaiming: "**Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**". Note that this is the physical Jesus, the "**Word made flesh**", the Messiah to Israel, come to restore the kingdom to his chosen people, not the ascended Lord of glory and grace who later revealed Himself from heaven to Paul after his resurrection and final rejection by Israel.

Importantly, this gospel to the **circumcision** proclaims an EARTHLY kingdom, which must be distinguished from the "**HEAVENLY kingdom**" (2 Timothy 4:18), which is in the "**heavenlies**" and is the ultimate home for all believers saved in the current dispensation of the grace of God. The kingdom of heaven (on earth) gospel was and still is God's plan to bring heaven's rule **down to earth** in the real flesh-and-blood person of the God-man the Lord Jesus Christ, albeit The promise is "on hold" for the present.

Thus in Matthew 5:5 the Lord says: "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the **earth***". And in Matthew 6:10 He taught his disciples to pray, "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on **earth** as in heaven*".

Are you getting the picture? Jesus came to **earth** physically to offer a real kingdom on **earth**. One day on **earth** He will sit on a real, physical throne in real, physical Jerusalem ruling a real physical world of real physical people through a real, physical nation of Israel. Prophecy says so. You see, it's physical, don't spiritualise it. And please realise, this was a message to Israel only (see Matthew 15:24) – it didn't then and doesn't now apply to Gentiles as a saving gospel.

The message from heaven

By contrast Paul's gospel to the **uncircumcision** is a **caught up to heaven** gospel for believers saved by grace through the Lord's death for their sin and "*translated into the (heavenly) kingdom of His Dear Son*" (Colossians 1:13).

This message to the Gentiles is firmly focused on **heaven**. Thus in Acts 9:3-5 it is the Lord from **heaven** who reveals Himself and this new gospel of grace to Paul and commissions him to take it to the Gentiles. (Check out Paul's corresponding accounts of his amazing conversion and immediate induction into the ministry in Acts 22 and 26). Paul called it "*the **heavenly** vision*", for that's what it was.

All through his epistles Paul maintains the emphasis on **heaven**. Thus in Ephesians 2:6 grace saved believers are told "*God hath raised us up together and made us sit together in **heavenly** places in Christ Jesus.*" In 2 Timothy 4:18 Paul wrote that the Lord would "*preserve me unto his **heavenly** kingdom.*"

A different destination

Notice that saints under the **grace gospel** go to **heaven**, while saints saved during the brief 40-50-year period of preaching the **kingdom** gospel nearly 2000 years ago sought to enter (or be resurrected) into a kingdom on **earth**.

Another difference is that the **kingdom** gospel is for Jews only (Matthew 15:24) while the **grace** gospel is for both Jew and Gentile. Getting saved differs too. Under the **kingdom** gospel **works** such as water baptism, selling all one has, giving to the poor and physically following the Messiah are required.

By contrast, under the **grace** gospel no works are required, all is of **grace** since Christ has done all that is necessary for our salvation through his death, burial and resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Thus we are forgiven, justified, sanctified, even glorified (Romans 8:30) "*by grace through faith, **not** of works lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In this **gospel** to the **uncircumcision** all is "*to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood*"

(Ephesians 1:6-7). More than that He has *“reconciled us in the body of his flesh through death to present us **holy and unblameable and unreprouvable** in his sight (Colossians 1:22).*

The gospel that saves today

Clearly it is the **gospel of grace** by which we are saved today. How important then to be in the right gospel and to stay in it. Paul in his epistles to grace believers (Romans through Philemon) stresses this over and over again. Thus he writes in Colossians 1:28:

*“If ye **continue** in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the **gospel** which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, of which I Paul am made a minister.”*

The gospel he refers to is, of course, the gospel of Acts 20:24 and Ephesians 2:8-9, the **grace** gospel preached by Paul. We should not be “moved away” from it to the **kingdom** gospel preached to the Jews only.

Indeed, the **gospel of grace** is the only one God is running with today. The **gospel** of the **kingdom** with its healings, signs and wonders, required works and prophecies, was set aside by God along with Israel when she for the third time rejected her Messiah and his message at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59-60).

Israel’s leaders had first rejected the Messiah Jesus at his announcement by John the Baptist. Then again when they and the mob took and crucified Him. They spurned Peter’s renewed offer of the kingdom at Pentecost. Finally, Messiah’s last messenger to the Jews at Jerusalem, Stephen was stoned.

Hence the Apostle John sadly writes (John 1: 11), *“He came unto his own but his own received him not”*. And in Romans 11:8-15 the Lord reveals through Paul how He has set Israel aside so that that the *“fall ”* and *“diminishing”* of them may be the *“riches of the Gentiles”*.

Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles

It is to Paul, not the 12 kingdom gospel apostles, that the Lord commits the *“dispensation of the grace of God”* (Ephesians 3:2). This dispensation includes the whole body of truth revealed to Paul by the risen, glorified Lord in heaven, a *“mystery”* that had been hidden in the secret counsels of God until then. Now recorded for us in the epistles of Paul it is unknown to the Old Testament prophets. Nor was it mentioned by Jesus in his earthly ministry.

Importantly for us, this revelation through Paul *“fulfills”* - that is completes – the Word of God (Colossians 1:25). Thus through Paul we see by faith the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in heavenly glory and read the record of his transformation in the written word, the scriptures.

It is a message primarily for Gentiles. That is why all of Paul’s epistles (with the exception of Hebrews) are addressed to Gentiles – Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, etc. By contrast the

later epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude are addressed to the dispersed Jewish believers, i.e. Israel. They contain messages specifically for the Dispersion and for those who will believe in the Tribulation when once again the kingdom of Christ on earth will be in focus and salvation will once more be by faith and works, not as it is now, by grace through faith.

Don't fall from grace

Today the **gospel** of the **grace** of God is the only saving gospel in the world. This is why Paul in Galatians 1:6 warns Gentiles against being *removed from Him who called you unto another gospel.*"

Avoid the muddled mix

Sadly today many church ministers preach a muddled mix of both the gospel of the **circumcision** (the kingdom of heaven on earth message to Jews) and the gospel of the **uncircumcision** (the gospel of the grace of God).

The result, both for preachers and hearers, is a "*fall from grace*". Those thus deceived go back under the law, the very thing Christ nailed to the cross on our behalf.

Today the wonderful truths of grace are all too often obscured by the rush to get back to the "simple gospel" preached by Jesus on earth. Actually for us now, living as we do in God's ordained dispensation of the grace of God, Jesus's earthly gospel is neither simple nor capable of being obeyed.

If you dispute that, let me ask: Have you sold all that you have to follow Him? He said this was necessary to become perfect and thus obtain eternal life. Have you moved a mountain by faith lately, obeyed all 613 commandments of the Mosaic law or gone your way and sinned no more? Can't be done, you say. You're right.

Far better, surely, to rest in the finished work of Christ, his death for us, burial for us, resurrection for us, set out for us in the gospel of **grace**.

The marvellous truths of grace

- Forgiveness and redemption through belief that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead for our justification (1 Cor. 15:1-4, Rom.4:25).
- One baptism BY the Holy Spirit (no, not water baptism, nor the baptism WITH the Holy Spirit that occurred at Pentecost), but the baptism BY the Holy Spirit into Christ Himself (Rom. 6:3, 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27).
- By this baptism we are made one with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3, Col. 2:12).
- By this baptism also we are made a member of the "*church which is his body*", that is the body of Christ, a truth unmentioned outside the Pauline epistles (Col. 1:24).
- We have Christ as the Head of this church (Col. 2:10), not the Pope, nor Queen Elizabeth II.
- We are justified by faith (Rom.4:25, 5:16-18).
- We have been freely given "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph. 1:3).

- We have received the spiritual “*circumcision without hands*” that is the cutting away by the Holy Spirit of “*body of the sins of the flesh*” - the old Adam nature - thus freeing the soul to obey Christ (Col. 2:11).
- Best of all we have “*abounding **grace***” to meet all our needs (2 Cor. 9:8).