

**Sunday School Lesson**

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road, and there was always some demand he had forgotten or failed to meet. If salvation depends upon fully and perfectly doing the will of God, we are of all men most miserable.

The love of God is not earned but given. God wants not slaves but sons. Not slavish obedience but faithful trust is what he asks from us.

Paul used Abraham as an example. Abraham took God at his word and believed his

promises and was blessed for his faith. Therefore, Paul declared, the men who, like Abraham, live by faith are God's heirs. The Galatians by their faith had already experienced God's grace.

3. Since God's favor was not dependent upon observing the law, it followed that it was not limited to the Jews. God regards all as creatures, and he shows no partiality to persons or any language, nation, or race.

This truth is hard to accept. It seems to be a part of sinful

human nature for each group to regard itself as superior. Jews regarded gentiles as being "unclean." Greeks considered all other people "barbarians." Romans felt they were obviously superior because they ruled the world. Rudyard Kipling could write of "lesser breeds without the law," and still today we like to claim, "We're number one."

However, in his missionary labors, Paul had observed that "all sorts and conditions of men"—and women too, which was a revolutionary idea in that

day—had received the grace of God. God's gift of new life in Christ was not reserved for one chosen nation. It was available to all. The Christian faith was good news for everyone.

1. Christianity is not a moral system but a life with God. To be sure, Christian faith issues in responsible moral living, but the moral living is the result, not the cause, of God's acceptance.

2. Faith is not gullibility but trust. Often faith is understood in strictly intellectual terms. Faith is thought of as giving assent to a catalogue of verbal

propositions. Faith, of course, involves the mind; but it is a commitment of the whole person.

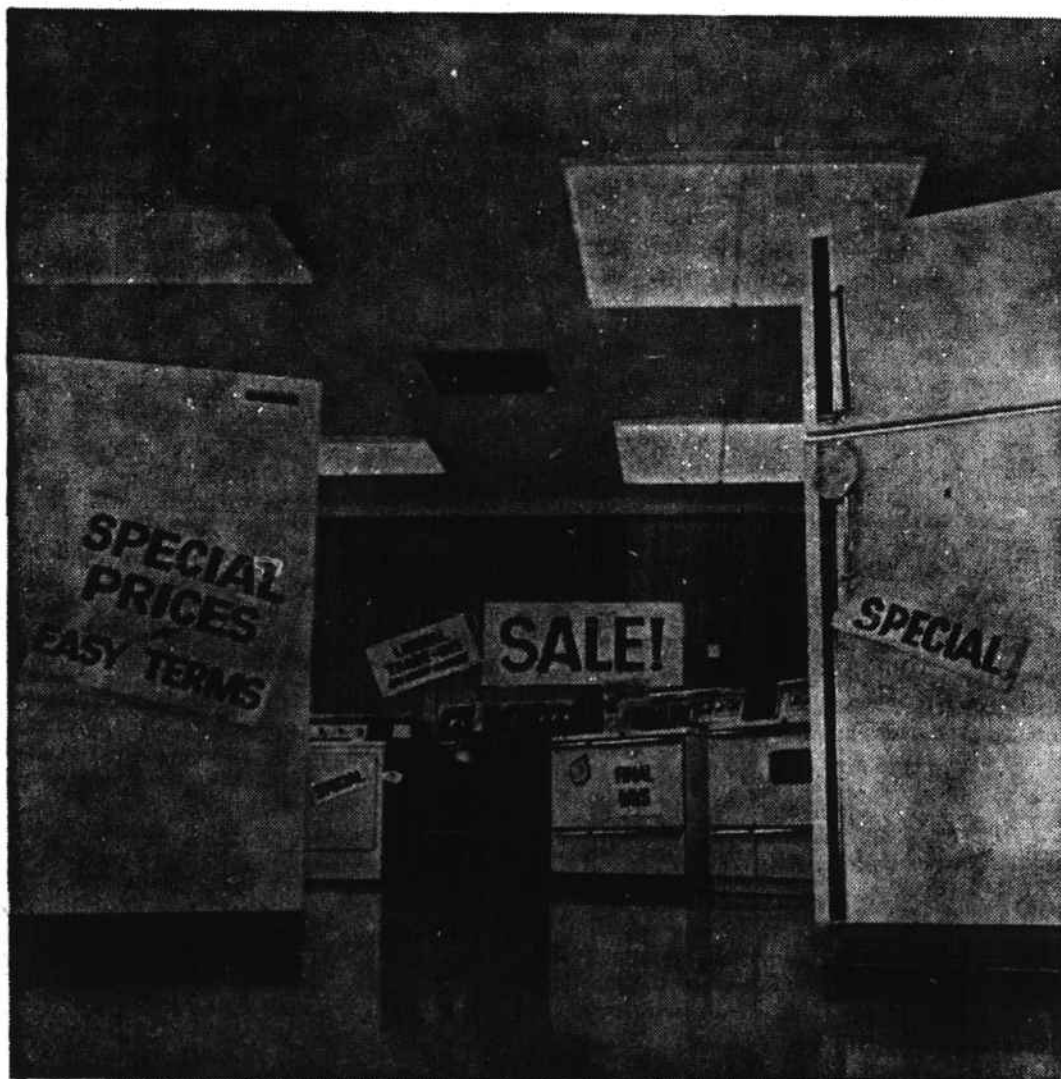
3. Before God there is no room for arrogance about one's race or station.

4. As God's agent, the church must be at the task of removing barriers. As we have seen, the early church did not easily learn the lesson of God's inclusive love. But through controversy and debate it did at last raise up a new people of God from Jews and gentiles, slaves and free men.

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