

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

January 2008



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The **Purpose** of the *Berean Bible Society* is to help you understand and enjoy the Bible. The **Mission** of BBS is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by proclaiming the whole counsel of God according to the revelation of the Mystery. Our **Goals** are to evangelize the lost, to educate the saved in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15), to energize their Christian lives, and to encourage the local church.

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Editor: Paul M. Sadler; Assistant Editor: Ricky L. Kurth

Composition and Layout: Kevin J. Sadler

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Questions, comments, orders? You can reach us at:

Berean Bible Society
 N112 W17761 Mequon Road
 PO Box 756
 Germantown, WI 53022

Main Office: (262) 255-4750
 Fax Number: (262) 255-4195

Internet: www.bereanbiblesociety.org
 E-mail: berean@execpc.com

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., CST

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

It is with praise and thanksgiving that we have completed the first phase of transferring all of our *Bible Time* reel-to-reel messages to a digital electronic format. We discovered in the process that we were very close to losing some of these messages due to the deterioration of the old magnetic tape that kept breaking apart.

The list of Pastor Stam's messages that are now available on CD is found on page 25. Each series of messages has had the introductions, music, announcements and noise edited out leaving only a crisp, clear presentation of the Scriptures. A number of new selections have been added to the catalog, such as individual messages on *Salvation*. These sets are in 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ albums which include beautiful pictures that grace the front cover. Each CD has two or three messages including Pastor Stam's sermon titles embossed on the front. We should add that these sets *cannot* be broken.

SPECIAL ATTENTION: Please keep in mind that this has been a long, arduous task to convert these messages to this new format. Literally hundreds and hundreds of hours were devoted to this project by those who volunteered their time. In the unlikely event you should come across a CD that has any type of problem, please return it to BBS and we will be more than happy to replace it *free of charge!* Since some of these messages were originally recorded on less than ideal recording equipment, you may have to adjust your CD player accordingly.

A special word of thanks is in order for all those who generously volunteered their time. When the project became hopelessly stalled early in the process, Sam Castrova stepped forward to lend us his assistance. Sam single-handedly served as our project manager, coordinating every phase of the undertaking. Russ Tunks did a number of the initial conversions until he had equipment problems. Ric Jennings picked up at this point, doing the lion's share of the conversions, cleaning up all of the messages and adjusting voice levels.

The next phase of the project is the conversion of my *Bible Time* messages to CD. Our dear Brother Greg Eadie has this part of the mission well in hand. The third phase of the project will be the conversion of our *Books on Tape*, followed by the placing of Pastor Stam's and my messages on our website so they can be downloaded, for a nominal fee, in an MP3 format. May this new endeavor make it possible to reach even more with the gospel of the grace of God.

Yours because of Calvary,
Paul M. Sadler, President

A Child of God



Dear Pastor Sadler and staff,

I just wanted to drop you a note of encouragement to let you know how God is working in one young girl's life. Alaina belongs to Jennifer and me and we were almost (no we were) in tears last night when she recited the rough draft for her poem. Alaina is 12 and in the 7th grade in the public school system here in Kansas. She wants to show her faith and make a difference in all the lives of people she encounters, both young and old. We all know it is difficult to shine as a Christian in today's world with everything that goes on around us, and that is why we were so touched by Alaina's school assignment.

Alaina's teacher provided the outline with the "I am" and "I hear" titles for each line. It was the student's job to fill in the blanks and describe themselves. We think Alaina is taking a bold and sincere stand for Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your ministry and all the truth that comes from your resources, it has impacted us in the best way possible.

Allen and Jennifer

I am a girl who sees and feels people's emotions and what they've been through.

I hear voices around me gossiping, lying, crying and laughing.

I see a place for everyone where there will be no crying, lying, hurtful comments and that is heaven.

I cry when I think of Christ dying on the cross, then I and the people around me sin.

I am a believer who is small but big and can do something huge in the world.

I am a sinner and try to cover it up, but I know it is wrong.

I want to take a stand and bring people in this ugly world to the Lord, who will bring them to a beautiful world.

I need the Lord to fight, to get strong, and to love.

I hope that I do my best when I can and do not quit.

I fear for people who don't believe in Christ and go to hell.

I am saved, but sometimes I act like I'm not.

I am a precious child of God who wants more to come into my family.

I feel horrible for the ones that are not reached in time.

I try to get out of my comfort zone, but I don't.

I wonder how many people realize what they have done with their life.

I dream of how marvelous heaven will be one day.

I am Alaina, a child of God.

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 3:15-21

By Paul M. Sadler

Shortly after I graduated from High School I worked for a large company that bottled Lotta Cola and Dr. Pepper. I started off running the bottling machine and eventually became one of the delivery drivers. The truck I drove was an *old* International straight job that probably should have been junked five years before I began driving for the company. As is the case with most companies, they were always trying to patch up the equipment, hoping in this case to get a few more miles out of a worn out vehicle.

One afternoon after being fully loaded with cases of quart bottles of soda, I pulled out of the loading dock for my destination, located in a town about one hundred and fifty miles from the plant. As you may or may not know, the roads in Pennsylvania have three prominent characteristics: narrow lanes, steep grades, and curves where you come around and meet yourself. As I began to descend one of these steep grades

that particular day I geared the truck down to slow its momentum. About one-third of the way down the hill I applied the brakes only to find that they would not engage—the brake pedal was jammed and wouldn't move.

After I recovered from the initial shock and regained my composure, I somehow was able to get the truck into “granny gear” (lowest, slowest gear). That helped momentarily, but between the weight of the load and the steep grade it was only a few moments before the truck started to pick-up speed. Next I *eased* on the emergency brake only to find it non-functional (I learned later it had been disconnected due to a lack of parts). At the bottom of the hill I knew I was going to have to cross a major intersection that included an active railroad crossing. I immediately turned on the headlights, the four-way flashers and laid on the horn, which was barely loud enough to awaken a church mouse!

Thankfully, everyone at the bottom of the hill was paying attention and stopped when they saw this old blue truck barreling toward them. When I crossed over the railroad tracks at a fairly good rate of speed, it sounded like every bottle in the truck broke. With no seatbelts back in those days, I was hanging on to the steering wheel for dear life in order to stay in the driver's seat. Apparently the sudden jarring of the truck jarred something loose in the braking system because when I hit the brakes again they worked! In fact, they worked so well I practically put myself through the windshield.

The lesson I learned that fateful day was that we live in an *imperfect* world. Not everyone is looking out for your well-being—greed often takes precedence over doing what is right. The same is sometimes true in the Lord's work; not every orator is concerned about your spiritual welfare. So it is refreshing when we come across a spiritual leader such as the Apostle Paul, who was genuinely concerned for those God had entrusted to his care. In the infinite counsel of God, Paul has been divinely appointed as a *pattern* for all believers to follow in both what he taught and the manner of life in which he lived.

WALKING WITH PAUL

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” —Phil. 3:15

When Paul says, “as many as be perfect,” it is important to

understand his usage of the term “perfect,” first, in the broader sense of his epistles, then in the immediate context in which the term is found. In Christ, we are *perfect* or complete positionally. This is the sense of the apostle's words when he wrote to the saints at Colosse, “And ye are complete in Him [Christ]” (Col. 2:10). If death were to claim you this very day, you would be ushered instantaneously into heaven to appear before a holy and righteous God, because you have a perfect *standing* before Him on the basis of the finished work of Christ.

While we are perfect in Christ, on this side of glory we still possess a sin nature; consequently, we will never reach a *state* of perfection in this life. But even though we will never fully realize it, like Paul, we are to strive toward this goal with every fiber of our being. This is what the apostle had in mind in Philippians 3:12 when he says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already *perfect*: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Although Paul knew he would fall far short of reaching a state of complete maturity, he still pressed forward to the glory of God.

When Paul states in verse 15, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded” he is in no way contradicting himself with regard to what he said in verse 12. He is simply saying that, even though he was far from the intended goal, he was a *mature* believer due to the fact that he consistently applied the grace of God in his life. Warren Wiersbe

makes this insightful comment: “The dual use of the word ‘perfect’ in verses 12 and 15 explains his [Paul’s] thinking. He has not arrived yet at perfection (vs. 12), but he is ‘perfect’ [mature] (vs. 15), and one mark of this maturity is the knowledge that he is *not* perfect! The mature Christian honestly evaluates himself and strives to do better.”¹ We couldn’t agree more!

How we respond to the things we encounter in life is often a good barometer of our spirituality. If someone were to rob you, what would your response be—despair or revenge? Matthew Henry, the renowned Bible commentator, experienced this very thing. After being robbed, he recorded in his journal the following: “Let me be thankful. First, because I was never robbed before. Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life. Third, because although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

“How we respond to the things we encounter in life is often a good barometer of our spirituality.”

Paul adds to “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, *and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*” The hallmark of a mature believer is that he has the mind of Christ, which has been woven throughout the

foregoing context (Phil. 2:3-5). We are to be like-minded as we strive toward the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. However, there were apparently some at Philippi who had failed to follow Paul’s example in this regard and, therefore, disagreed with some of his teachings. With human nature such as it is, Paul would have undoubtedly agreed with the line from Samuel Butler’s 17th century poem, “*He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still.*” Although these believers were probably sincere, they were sincerely wrong; consequently, the apostle chose to leave the matter with the Lord to correct their way of thinking. Contrary to popular opinion, the above passage clearly teaches divine intervention in our lives at times.

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. 3:16,17).

There are three words in this passage that help to point us in the right direction so we don’t lose our way in the Christian life. First, the word “rule” in the original language simply means a *standard*, which in this case has the idea of a standard of faith and practice. Next, “followers together” is one word in the Greek that denotes a *co-imitator*. Finally, the term “ensample” is a type or *pattern*. When we pull all of this together we learn that Paul is **God’s** ordained *pattern* who received from the Lord of glory the *standard* of faith for today embodied in the

teachings of grace; thus we are to be *imitators* of his teachings and manner of life.

Seeing that the verb “be followers” in verse 17 is in the imperative mood the above isn’t a suggestion, but a *command* of God to which all members of the Body of Christ are to conform. This is why Paul instructs us to “mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” In other words, we are to *mark*, “look closely at” or observe the lives of other believers to see if they have ordered their Christian walk according to Paul’s gospel. For example, if you are reading a commentary and the commentator states we are to follow the Great Commission, it is obvious he has rejected or is unaware of Paul’s apostleship and message. While we owe other members of the Body of Christ their due respect, we are not required to place ourselves under their unsound teachings or realm of influence.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)” (Phil. 3:18,19).

We find it interesting that the translators chose to place these two passages in the form of a parenthetical thought. They perceived the apostle was digressing momentarily to contrast two very different mindsets. We believe the contrast is between those who desired to have the mind of



Christ and those who desired to mind worldly things. Since Paul has already addressed those who were mature and immature believers in Christ in the foregoing context, we can safely conclude he is speaking about *unbelievers* here in verses 18 and 19.

The “many” the apostle speaks of here were false teachers who had professed Christ but were *unregenerate*. In view of the fact that the salvation of God is through the Cross alone, those who teach salvation by works are clearly identified by Paul as “enemies of the Cross.” They may have had an outward form of godliness, but they denied the power thereof, to which Paul says, “from such turn away” (II Tim. 3:5). In a word, the enemies of the Cross are those who deny the efficacy of the shed blood of Christ, believing there are other paths to acceptance with God. Seeing their end, Paul shared with the Philippians how he *wept* over

these lost souls who were headed for a Christless eternity. This is a good example of following Paul's manner of life, for we too should have the same burden to reach those who are dangling over the lake of fire by one thin thread of human existence.²

Due to the fact that these unregenerate teachers defiantly continued in their rebellion, the apostle leveled four indictments against them:

"Whose end is destruction" or perdition! Notice Paul addresses the *end* of those who are enemies of the Cross. Their eternal end will be "destruction," which is defined by Strong as *ruin and loss of spiritual well-being*. Thayer adds, "The destruction which consists of eternal misery in hell." Peter used this same term when he pronounced the following scathing condemnation of the false teachers of his day: "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves **swift destruction**" (II Pet. 2:1).

The road to destruction of these enemies of the Cross passes through the present torment of *Hades* where they await their summons to appear before the Great White Throne Judgment, which will ultimately determine the degree of their eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Matt. 10:15; 11:22-24; 23:14; II Thes. 1:7-9 cf. Rev. 20:11-15). We should note that a gracious provision of salvation was made for them, they had heard the gospel, they were *warned* when they rejected it, and the apostle wept over them, praying they would turn from

their rebellion. So when these false teachers find themselves in eternal torment they will have no one to blame but themselves.

As we saw earlier, we are able to determine whether or not believers are following Paul's apostleship and message by *observing* their walk. While only the Lord knows for certain those who are His own, the conduct of the unbeliever will often expose that he is walking in the vanity of his mind (Eph. 4:17). With this in mind, the apostle goes on to say regarding these false teachers:

"Whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19).

These evildoers were given over to a life of self-indulgence and fleshly appetites. Their philosophy was, "let's eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." By way of contrast, the believer glories in the Cross of Christ, whereas these unbelievers are said to boast in the shame of their evil ways. Furthermore, they had no desire whatsoever to set their affections on things above, but were preoccupied with earthly things such as fame and fortune. Unlike Moses, they took pleasure in sin for a season.

A HOME IN HEAVEN

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Having described the final destiny of those who were enemies of the Cross, Paul now turns to our *hope* as members of the Body of Christ. As we know, Philippi was a

colony of Rome. This meant those who were born there were Roman citizens, with all the rights and responsibilities that went along with it. So when Paul states: "For our conversation [or *citizenship*] is in heaven," the Philippians could easily relate to what the apostle was saying. Essentially believers in Christ are a colony of heavenly citizens here on earth whose homeland is in heaven.

Heaven is a place! It is a very real, tangible realm that is teeming with activity (I Kings 8:30 cf. II Cor. 5:8,9). Of course astronomers tell us the sun is the center of our solar system, but it is the earth that is always the primary focal point of God's creation. Everything in creation is in relation to the earth; therefore, the heavens surround it. As we move out from the face of the earth we have the *first heaven*, commonly called our atmosphere where we see the beautiful cloud formations; the *second heaven* would be the planetary system; and the *third heaven*, called the heaven of heavens, is the abode of God. When Christ stepped across the stars, He came *down* from heaven to the earth to redeem us back to God (John 3:13). Paul, on the other hand, was caught *up* to heaven to receive a special revelation concerning the Mystery (II Cor. 12:1-4).

So then, our home and citizenship is in the third heaven, the abode of God where we look for the Savior who will catch us *up* into glory. The return of Christ to which Paul refers is the pretribulational Rapture of the Church. One of the reasons our hope is called a *blessed hope*

is because the Lord Himself is going to return for His Church, at which time we will see Him face to face in all His glory. We are to be presently *looking* for the Savior who will soon return from heaven. The term *look* in Philippians 3:20 has the idea in the original to "expect eagerly," which we understand includes the sense of momentary expectation. This would make sense seeing that the Lord's return for His Church is *imminent*. There are no signs, times, or seasons that will precede the event; it could take place at any moment (I Thes. 1:10).

"Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21).

Another dimension of our blessed hope is that we will receive our glorified resurrected body when the trump sounds. These old bodies of humiliation that are subject to illness, disease and death will be gloriously transformed and fashioned like unto Christ's resurrected body. Christ's resurrection from the dead is the guarantee of our future resurrection. What was true of Christ's resurrected body, will be true of ours as well (Luke 24:36-45).

The resurrection from the dead spoken of here in Philippians is not to be confused with the first resurrection recorded in the prophetic Scriptures. The resurrection Paul makes reference to in Corinthians, Philippians and Thessalonians is a *secret* resurrection which is only taught in his epistles. The apostle clearly

says, “Behold, I show you a **mystery** [a secret]...for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:51-53). Since Christ will only bring with Him those who have believed Paul’s terms of salvation there is little question that the secret resurrection pertains *exclusively* to the members of the Body of Christ (I Thes. 4:13-18).

Like our Lord, our identity will be *preserved* in both the disembodied state and in the resurrection. As we noted in an earlier study, Samuel, who was permitted to return from paradise in a disembodied state, was *recognized*

by King Saul (I Sam. 28:11-20). On the mount of transfiguration, the Spirit revealed to the disciples that one of the two who appeared before them was Moses, who was also in a disembodied state (Matt. 17:1-3). And there was no question whatsoever in the minds of the disciples that it was the Lord who appeared to them after His resurrection (John 20:24-29). It is consoling to know with all certainty that there will be *recognition* in heaven!

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, New Testament, Volume 2, page 88.
2. ©iStockphoto.com/stocksnapper

Question Box

“Are you really asked the questions that appear in the Question Box, or do you make them up?”

The questions that appear in the Question Box are genuine questions that were asked of us, either by letter, by phone, or in person at the Bible conferences in which we participate. Thus we feel the Question Box is a reflection of the kinds of questions that God’s people are asking in the Grace Movement.

You’ll notice that the size of the Question box always varies from just a few lines to a full page. This is because the Question Box always appears at the end of one of our Bible study articles. Since our articles always vary in length, so does the size of the Question Box. It is often difficult to choose a question that is substantive, challenging and informative, and yet can be answered in just a few lines, but we try our best.

If you have a question that you are afraid to ask because you feel it requires more than a one page answer, please don’t hesitate to submit it anyway. Deeper questions requiring longer answers can always be addressed in a *Searchlight* article.

—Pastor Kurth

2008 Sheridan Bible Conference

Dates: February 16-17, 2008

Location: *Grace Fellowship Bible Church*
413 S. Main Street
Sheridan, Arkansas

Speakers: Pastor Paul M. Sadler
Pastor Joel Finck

Theme: *What is God Doing Today?*

For more information, please contact:
Pastor Dick Ware, Church (870) 942-2700
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Spotlight on Grace Churches

This month's church is:

Berean Bible Church

Location: 1400 Birch Street, Denver, Colorado 80220

Pastor: Ronald T. Fox, Jr.

Services: 9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Worship Service
7:00 p.m. Wednesday Prayer & Bible Study

Contact information:

Phone: 303-329-0409

Fax: 303-329-0689

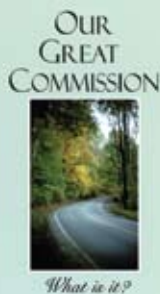
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A Closing Appeal

By C. R. Stam



FAITHFULNESS TO OUR COMMISSION

We have seen that in Paul's day his "preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery" encountered opposition on every hand. For faithfully proclaiming this glorious message he was constantly called upon to bear affliction and reproach. In his last letter, written from prison in Rome, he calls attention to the distinctive character of his message, and adds:

"Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds..." (II Tim. 2:7-9).

The almost constant suffering to which the apostle of grace was subjected naturally had its effect upon timid souls. Some, who saw the truth and the glory of his message, lacked the courage to stand with him in making it known. Others, who had started with him were tempted to—and some did—turn back.

In the light of all this it is not strange that Paul should write to Timothy:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (II Tim. 1:7,8).

Nor is it strange that the apostle should urge his son in the faith to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" and to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," especially since *he himself* needed constant help in this regard.

Oh, that all who have come to see the glory of the gospel of the grace of God would pray for boldness to proclaim it, as Paul did in Ephesians 6:19,20 and elsewhere!

Some may suppose that it would require little boldness *today* to proclaim grace in all its purity. Who is ever persecuted now, at least in free, enlightened lands, for preaching God's grace? Ah, but do not be deceived. Satan was no

less active in his opposition to the truth when Constantine exalted the professing Church to prominence than when his predecessors persecuted the Church and sent its members to death by fire and sword. Indeed, the devil was doubtless *more successful* in Constantine's day than he had been when persecution raged. And does any believer in the Word of God suppose that Satan has relented in his opposition to the truth today just because men, at least in this land, are not burned at the stake or thrown to the lions? Do not be misled. Satan's enmity against God and against His Word continues undiminished. His hatred of "the gospel of the grace of God" is as bitter, and his opposition to it as determined as they ever were. But well does he know that the look of scorn is often more effective than the fiery sword. Well does he know that the constant discouragements connected with being in the minority often succeed in silencing those who would stand courageously against physical persecution.

Let us, who know and love the truth, then, determine by God's grace that *nothing* shall make us unfaithful to our glorious commission; that, whatever the cost, we shall faithfully and boldly proclaim to others the unadulterated gospel of the grace of God, "*the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery.*"

A WELL-ROUNDED MESSAGE

But must we always be preaching about the mystery revealed

to Paul? Would not this be one-sided? Would it not be riding a hobby?

Well, was Ezra riding a hobby in proclaiming the law of Moses to Israel day after day? No, for this was God's program for his day. Were the twelve apostles riding a hobby as they went everywhere proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom"? No, this was the message they had been *sent* to proclaim. The Pharisees and scribes were probably the ones who were giving equal time to all parts of the Jewish Bible, but had they been in the will of God they would have joined the apostles in accepting and proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom," using the Old Testament Scriptures rather to confirm the God-given message.

Was Paul riding a hobby in his constant proclamation of grace? No, for this was the ministry which he had "received of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24). In Ephesians 3:2,3 he asks his readers "if ye have heard of *the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery.*" This was the message he was *commissioned* to proclaim, and he rightly called it "my gospel" (Rom. 16:25, *et al.*) It is *our* gospel too, and we should never apologize for proclaiming it consistently.

Those who suppose that this means that we must keep harping on one string, as it were, only betray their ignorance of the broad scope of this great body of truth. We shall never fully measure the breadth and length and depth and height of it (Eph. 3:18,19), but as we keep measuring we come to



experience more and more “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). In II Corinthians 4:7 God calls it a “*treasure*.” In Colossians 1:27 He says that He would have His saints know “*the riches of the glory*” of it. In II Timothy 1:14 He calls it a “*precious deposit*,” committed to our trust. When *God* uses such phraseology we may be sure that what He refers to was not purchased at a dime store! How could we possibly dispense all these riches of God in one sermon, or five, or ten, or ten thousand!

Those who fail to faithfully fulfil this great commission often talk of a “well-rounded ministry” and quote II Timothy 3:16 to support their position. The difficulty is, however, that they generally read into this passage what it does not say and they fail to read the *whole* statement to see what it *does* say.

II Timothy 3:16,17 does not say, nor does it imply, that we should give *equal time or emphasis* to all parts of the Word of God. It states rather that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that THE MAN*

OF GOD may be perfect, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED unto all good works.” Thus all Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable to us *in the proclamation of our God-given message*, especially since the mystery revealed to Paul casts light on all the Word of God and is confirmed by it. One has rightly called the mystery “the golden key that unlocks the Scriptures.”

Is it not significant in this connection that Paul’s declaration in II Timothy 3:16 is preceded by that in II Timothy 2:15:

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

But does not II Timothy 4:2 say: “*Preach the Word*”? Yes, and some have taken this to mean that all parts of the Bible are to be given equal emphasis in our preaching. More mature reflection, however, should convince us that this is not so but that the apostle here calls *his* God-given message “*the Word*.” If a man preaches obedience to the ceremonial law from Leviticus and Deuteronomy, is he preaching the Word? Certainly not in the sense that Paul intended it. If he exhorts his hearers from the Gospels and early Acts to sell all their possessions and have “all things common,” is he preaching the Word? If he preaches from Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38, and tells the lost: “Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins,” is he preaching the Word? Certainly not in the sense that the apostle meant it in II Timothy 4:2, for the Scriptures must be “rightly divided” and all these passages must be considered in the light of

the “mystery,” the secret revealed through Paul.

A Grave Responsibility

The same apostle who declares that all Scripture is inspired and profitable, also emphasizes our grave responsibility to guard faithfully and dispense wisely the blessed message committed to him and to us. See his exhortations to young Timothy:

I Tim. 6:3-5: “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is...destitute of the truth...from such withdraw thyself.”

I Tim. 6:20: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust....”

II Tim. 1:13,14: “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me....That good thing which was committed unto thee [Lit., “that precious deposit”] keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

II Tim. 2:2: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

II Tim. 2:7-9: “Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.”

The times have changed, to be sure, but not our commission. The great revelation of grace first committed to Paul, and then to his associates, and then to other

“faithful men,” is our great commission still. It has never been superseded or annulled, and it has certainly not yet been fulfilled. If we fail to obey it, or if we neutralize or water it down to accommodate ourselves to the confusion of our times we are derelict in our duty and will answer to God for it.

Conclusion

Is not this the time to rededicate ourselves, or perhaps to dedicate ourselves for the first time, to the proclamation of this glorious message committed to us?

Ephesians 1:9 declares that God *has* “made known unto us the mystery of His will.” In Colossians 1:9 the apostle prays that believers might be “filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” and in Chapter 4, Verse 12, he reminds the saints that others are praying that they might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

We have no right to choose our own calling. God says: “*Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price,*” and whatever the details involved, it is clear that it is *His* will that we spend our brief existence on earth making known to others the blessed message which He has commissioned us to proclaim. If you can *best* accomplish this by becoming a farmer or physicist, by teaching mathematics or going into business, this is fine, but none of us should ever forget—none has a right to forget—what it is that God has commissioned us, as His ambassadors, to do.

Each one of us must ask himself: “Why has God left me in this world? What is my responsibility

to Him and to those about me?” It is good to stop every so often and ask ourselves such questions lest our lives be frittered away to no purpose when God would make our service for Him vital and effective and would use us, each in his own way, to make some significant contribution to our generation.

What good if we learn everything under the sun, but do not even understand the mighty message He has committed to our trust? What will it profit us to become noted in any field, including the ministry, if we fail to fulfil God’s purpose for us or to make known to others the blessed truths He has left us here to proclaim? It is fine to have a keen intellect, but God wants an intellect *and a heart* on fire to make His grace known to a dying world.

How the world and the Church need dedicated believers who will forget position or temporal gain and place themselves at God’s disposal for *service*; who will gladly toil and suffer, trusting God alone to supply their needs, so that others may come to rejoice in the riches of His grace.

This is a high and holy calling, and not to be despised. Perhaps you have heard of the capable young pastor in a small country church, who was offered a lucrative position by a representative of a large business firm. When he declined the offer, the representative pressed him further, assuring him that the salary suggested could be raised considerably, perhaps even doubled, adding: “That would be many times what you are getting here.” Finally the pastor said: “Let me explain it in this

way. I have a big job here with a small salary. You are offering me a small job with a big salary. I prefer the former—the big job with the small salary.” This pastor had things in clear perspective.

Paul suffered trouble, imprisonment and death as the bond-slave of Christ to make this blessed message known and we are still reaping the luscious fruit. Again and again the apostle says, by divine inspiration: “*Be ye followers of me.*” Will you heed the call? Will you change your plans completely, if necessary, to offer yourself to God in unremitting service to make known to others those glorious truths we are commissioned to proclaim? If God’s people will do this, our mission stations will not go unmanned; our Sunday Schools will not lack teachers; our small churches will not go without pastors. Rather these churches will gain inspired leaders and will become larger churches and great spiritual victories will be won for the Christ who loved us and died for us.

God bless our readers, each one, and use you, not merely in some secondary way, but to the fullest possible extent, to make known to others “the exceeding riches of His grace.”

The End!



Endnote

1. See the author’s booklet, *The Dimensions of the Mystery*.

If this book has proved a blessing to you, why not help us get it out to others!

Discerning the Will of God

By Ricky Kurth

The fourth and final message in a series of four given this past summer at the 39th Annual Bible Conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship in Cedar Lake, Indiana

Last month we concluded we cannot be *certain* of the will of God in advance. But if this be so, how are we to make decisions in life? Let's begin by laying some groundwork in Ephesians 1:5:

“Having predestinated us unto the ADOPTION of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Adoption in Bible days occurred when a young Hebrew *boy* was officially recognized by his father as an adult *son*. Up 'til then, the boy was kept under tutors and governors, who treated him like a child, telling him things like, “Don't touch that, it's hot!”, and “Don't eat that, that's an insect!”¹ But from the day the boy was recognized to be an adult son, he was responsible to make his *own* decisions in life.

In the same way, the people of Israel were often called “the *children* of Israel,” for God *treated* them like children. He gave them a Law that told them what they could eat and what they could not eat, what they could touch and what they could not touch. But we are not under the Law (Rom. 6:14,15), and so are not subject to the ordinances of “touch not; taste not; handle not” (Col. 2:20-22), and can eat whatever we please (I Tim. 4:4). We have received the adoption (Gal. 4:5), and God considers us responsible to make our *own* decisions in life. And since Ephesians 1:5 says all this was “according to the good pleasure of *His will*,” we know that it is *the will of God* that we make our own decisions in life!



Let's look now to the life of the Apostle Paul, whom God calls our "pattern" (I Tim. 1:16), and see how Paul made decisions as an adult son, without knowing God's will in advance. We begin in Acts 15:36-38:

"...Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

"But Paul *thought not good* to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."

When there was a decision to be made, Paul did not wait for step-by-step directions from God, as he received in Acts 16:6,7. Even though he would continue to hear from God audibly (Acts 23:11) and through prophets (21:4,10,11), God was already conditioning Paul to begin to *think for himself*, and make decisions without knowing God's will in advance. Here, he "*thought not good*" to bring John with him.

Did Paul *find* the will of God here? Seemingly not, for the sharp contention between Barnabas and him caused them to go their separate ways. But if it be God's will for men to be saved and come to know His truth (I Tim. 2:4), then surely God's will *was* done, for now there were *two* parties going forth in His name, instead of just one!

How did Paul make his decision? He simply drew on his past experience with John (Acts 13:13), and determined that the present mission was too important to give him another chance to prove his dependability. Barnabas meanwhile had already seen signs that John was maturing into the "profitable" servant that even Paul later judged him to be (II Tim. 4:11). In short, both men made decisions based on their *experience*, and the will of God was done in the end.

Are there tools other than experience that we can use to help us make decisions in the will of God? Let's consider some other examples from the life of Paul, our pattern:

"Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus...

"Which was *well reported of by the brethren* that were at Lystra and Iconium.

"Him would Paul have to go forth with him..." (Acts 16:1-3).

Looking back, choosing Timothy to replace John Mark was obviously the will of God, for he became a selfless servant of the Lord (Phil. 2:19-22). But how did Paul *know* the will of God here? He couldn't know it for sure, but he based his decision on *the recommendation of other believers*, for Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren in *two different cities*. This is good advice for us as we seek the will of God, in all areas of life. This writer seldom chooses a doctor or a mechanic without a recommendation, nor do we purchase a Ford or a Chrysler without weighing the advice of others who know more about such things.

Similarly, we would hope that a church wouldn't call a *pastor* without some sort of recommendation. That's all "ordination" really is, written evidence that a group of godly men have given their approval of a spiritual man. In Paul's day, such approval came in the form of "letters of commendation" (II Cor. 3:1), which as an apostle he himself did not need, but which a local church today would be wise to seek.

Is there an example in Paul's life that would help us in the area of finding employment? We feel we find just such an example in Acts 18:

"After these things Paul...came to Corinth;

"And found a certain Jew named Aquila...with his wife Priscilla....

"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers" (v. 1-3).

Upon arriving in Corinth, the Apostle found a job by what is now called *networking*, i.e., finding work by making your need known among your circle of friends and relatives. Many trades and industries seem dominated by certain ethnic groups simply because these groups decided to help their own at hiring time. Paul's example here shows there is no reason God's people can't do the same. When this writer was a teen, a carpenter in our church hired him as a helper on a job, and later in our painting business, we hired people from our own church almost exclusively. If more Christian employers would follow this example whenever possible, there might be fewer believers looking for work.

The next time we find Paul discerning God's will, it just may have saved his life. The silversmiths in Ephesus incited a riot to oppose the teachings of Paul, and the whole city rushed into the theatre in a crazed fervor (Acts 19:23-29).

"And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not" (Acts 19:30).

Here we see that God can help us make decisions in life through the aid of *godly counsel* received from trusted friends (Prov. 11:14). But it is imperative that, like Paul, we be careful to receive such help only from "*the disciples*," and not from Oprah or Dr. Phil, etc. In football, a good quarterback often seeks advice from his veteran coaches, but he never crosses the field to seek advice from the opposing team's coaches!² Unbelievers are not *always* wrong in their advice, but even a broken clock is right twice a day!

In the next verse, we see Paul receiving advice from yet another source:



“And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre” (Acts 19:31).

The Greek word for “*chief of Asia*” here is *Asiarches*, a class of wealthy and prominent men recognized by the Roman empire and promoted to positions of authority. If you think about it, there is a *reason* why men get to be wealthy and prominent and promoted. It is because they have made *wise choices* in life. And so we see that advice from believers such as this is an especially good source of counsel.

Perhaps the reader is thinking that it didn’t take a rocket scientist to know that Paul should not attempt to address a dangerous mob of what he himself later admitted were “*beasts*” (I Cor. 15:32). However, *knowing* what was best and *convincing Paul* of it was quite another matter! Paul did not count his life dear to himself (Acts 20:24), and all he saw that day was an opportunity to preach to an assembled multitude of souls. These were wise men indeed, who could talk Paul out of preaching the gospel his heart *burned* to preach. These chief men were able to help Paul see the big picture, and to know that it was decidedly *not* God’s will that he preach the gospel that day. Through their wise counsel, Paul lived to preach another day, and to write the prison epistles that completed the Word of God, enriching the lives of us all.

Another threat on Paul’s life was averted in the very next chapter:

“...And when the Jews *laid wait* for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia” (Acts 20:3).

The Bible phrase “*laid wait*” here refers to an *ambush* that was set in hopes of slaying Paul. How did he react to this? “As he was about to” do one thing, he changed his plans at the last moment! Then we read,

“And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater...Aristarchus...Secundus...Gaius...Timotheus...Tychicus and Trophimus” (Acts 20:4).

Hearing of the ambush, Paul surrounded himself with *seven bodyguards!* He didn’t need a dream or a vision from God to suggest this wise course of action, just common sense! And there is yet more to Paul’s resourcefulness:

“These going before tarried for us at Troas” (Acts 20:5).

After the bodyguards discouraged an immediate attack, Paul sent them ahead as *decoys* while he himself waited behind, a tactic that would make our own Secret Service proud as they guard our president.

But what happens when the decisions we make are *not* in line with the will of God? We feel this scenario is addressed as we turn now to Paul’s epistles:

“Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,)...” (Rom. 1:13).

We believe it was *Satan* who “let” or *hindered* Paul from going to Rome (cf. I Thes. 2:18). But why did God allow this? Looking back in hindsight, we can conclude that the believers in Rome didn’t *need* a visit from Paul! In Chapter 16 of this epistle, he mentions *twenty-seven prominent saints*, serving the Lord in at least *three separate assemblies*. They were doing just fine without him!

Interestingly, the Greek word for “*purposed*” here is most often translated “*judgment*.” In Paul’s judgment, the Romans needed a visit from him, but God *overruled*, and allowed Satan to hinder him. What a comfort it is to know that God can even use our adversary to accomplish His will and bring about the best spiritual results (something He proved abundantly at Calvary!). For our part, Paul’s use of the phrases “it may be,” and “I trust” and “if the Lord permit” (I Cor. 16:5-7) indicate that while the apostle made decisions as an adult son, he left it all with the Lord, something that we too would do well to bear in mind.

Sometimes even after gathering wise counsel, drawing on past experiences, and employing all the decision-making tools that an adult son can muster, it is *still* not clear what we should do. But even in times such as this, we can still look to the example of Paul for guidance. Speaking of his desire to send Timothy to the Philippians, Paul said,

“Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me” (Phil. 2:23).

When Paul wasn’t certain what to do, he took a “wait and see” attitude, and so should we. How precious it is to see God’s *Word* directing us to God’s *will* even when it is not clear what should be done.

What about discerning the will of God in finding a spouse? First, we know from II Corinthians 6:14 that we must not consider being “*unequally yoked*” with an unbeliever. If you marry a child of the devil, you are going to have trouble with your father-in-law! But after you are convinced that your potential spouse is saved and likeminded in matters of faith and practice, then Christian men and women are free to follow the advice Paul gave to Christian women: “she is at liberty to be married *to whom she will*” (I Cor. 7:39). Having received the adoption, you are free to make an adult decision and marry *whomever you will!*

As we study God’s Word, however, both men and women can benefit from tips we see in Scripture, such as we find in Genesis 24. While we cannot seek a spouse by asking what Abraham’s servant asked when he petitioned the Lord (v. 14), there are some things we can glean from this passage that might prove helpful in the area of choosing a mate.

For instance, notice Rebekah “went down” and “came up” to water the camels of Abraham’s servant (v. 16). This indicates the well was *downhill*, and she had to carry the water *uphill*. This shows she wasn’t *lazy*, and a good work ethic is an excellent character trait to seek in a spouse. Notice also she “*hasted*” to bring the water (v. 18), showing

her *eagerness* to be of service. Nor did she cease her trips up and down the hill until she had drawn water “for *all* his camels” (v. 20), *all ten of them!* (v. 10). We are told that after a long day, *one* camel can drink up to *twenty gallons* of water. Multiply that times ten camels and we are amazed to read that this young girl may have carried 200 gallons of water weighing 1600 pounds (over $\frac{3}{4}$ ton!) *uphill* to water the camels of a *stranger!* Such *kindness* is yet another quality to look for in a mate.³

How does one find such a wonderful companion? Listen as Abraham’s servant thanked God for his find:

“...I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren” (Gen. 24:27).



Abraham had sent his servant to the land of his brethren to seek a wife for his son, but once out of sight, a slothful servant could have saved himself a lot of work by looking closer to home. But had Abraham’s servant done so, he would have been looking for love in all the wrong places. But this servant wanted *God’s* choice, and so put himself *in God’s way!* Similarly, if you are looking for a grace believing spouse, you too need to *get in God’s way!* Attend our Bible conferences and camp retreats, vacation near grace churches, enroll in our *Berean Bible Institute*, and you too are much more apt to find a partner in the house of *your* Master’s brethren.

Finally, how is a man to know if it is God’s will for him to enter the ministry? After this writer was saved a year, at age 16 we asked our pastor this very question. He wisely opened his Bible to I Timothy 3:1:

“If a man *desire* the office of a bishop, he *desireth* a good work.”

Notice that “*desire*” is the first thing Paul mentions (twice!) in the list of qualifications for the ministry that follows. And so if you have a *desire* to serve the Lord in the ministry full-time, *consider yourself called*, for most men do *not* have this desire.

This writer was blessed to be saved in a grace church, and in the year following our salvation, we could tell from listening to Christian radio that *we have the answer* to the prevailing confusion in Christendom! It was *this* that instilled in us a *burning desire* to make this blessed message known as the pastor of a local church.

And so if your heart *burns* to champion the message of grace, don’t wait for a sign from God. Instead, continue to study His Word, begin to develop the qualifications listed in this passage, and seek to be trained for His service. If you are faithful in these things, perhaps someday a group of godly men will be able to recommend that you be ordained to the ministry.

In closing, if it be asked *why* God chose to allow us to seek His will as adult sons, prayerfully making informed decisions as best we can, we believe that this is only a taste of how we will be serving God throughout eternity. Sometimes we are asked what heaven will be like, and whether or not God will *control* us in some robotic way. We like to reply with a passage from I Kings 22, where God gives us a glimpse of a heavenly staff meeting conducted in the days of King Ahab:

“And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.


“And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.

“And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so” (v. 20-22).

Here Ahab had done wickedly, and it was the will of God that he die by the sword in battle. But how could he be convinced to attack Ramoth-gilead? Surely *God* knew the best way to convince him! Why does it appear He is asking His heavenly host for suggestions?

“...what happens when the decisions we make are *not* in line with the will of God?”

We believe that God here is *developing talent* among His host, the way a wise CEO might know the best path that his corporation should take, but presents the problem to his staff in an effort to help *them* develop the same type of analytical mind that enabled *him* to rise to the top and serve the company to his full potential. We submit that this is how it will be in heaven. Rather than micro-managing our lives, our sonship will continue on in heaven, and we will spend eternity learning how to serve Him better. What a privilege to be already *training* for this service *now*, in *this* life!

As we conclude our study of this important subject, we hope the reader has found these suggestions helpful in seeking God’s will, especially our young people. We wonder if some of them feel that every detail of their lives is pre-determined, and if they make one wrong turn in life they will somehow miss out on the will of God forever. If this series has done nothing else, we trust it has allayed this type of thinking, and instilled in *all* of our readers the confidence which the Lord Jesus Christ would like us to have as we endeavor to live for Him. 

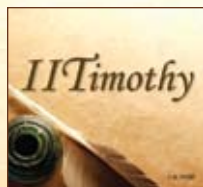
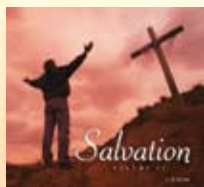
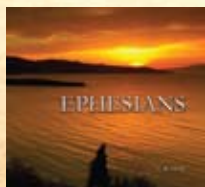
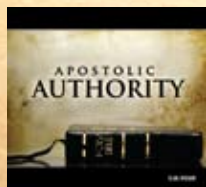
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“My passion to study God’s Word has deepened so much since I understand the Mystery!”

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From Montana:

“The Lord is blessing me with a deeper understanding of the truth. However, it is a truth that not many know about or believe in, and right now, some are in fact getting quite upset about what I am presenting for Bible study. Please pray for me, because this may be becoming a bit divisive, and I am not sure yet how to handle the situation. Whether to back off, or press on, especially because I am not even sure yet, though what I have seen so far rings true to me through the Scriptures. I don’t mean to take up too much of your time, but if one soul is important, then this soul would dearly like to understand and know the truth of God more than anything else.” (The spirit of Job 23:12b lives on!—RK).

From the Internet:

“When you understand Paul, you understand it all!”

From Florida:

“I am a student at *Pensacola Christian College*, and I use the *Searchlight* to start my day a few mornings a week.”

From Colorado:

“It was *Things That Differ* that made me see the light. If it was not for that book, in all honesty, I do not know where I would be today. Most likely confused, and while saved, I would probably *not* be attending any church, as Acts 2 theology left me confused, distraught, empty and rejecting God’s Word.”

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“My brother and I joined up with a Christian motorcycle group, who turned out to be charismatic. When it came to baptizing and talking in tongues I resorted to the internet. It is almost as if we were sent to this stepping stone to gain firsthand experience and make us do research. My brother and I still talk about how fortunate we were to have found your site. It gave us a vast understanding of the Bible, which enables us to immediately recognize false doctrine.”

From Oklahoma:

“Would like to attend your meetings, but we are out of your area. Thanks for the monthly magazine. Good teaching!” (Invite us to Oklahoma! That would be “OK” with us.—RK).

From New York:

“I have been so blessed with your *Searchlight* so often I can’t thank you enough and, of course, the Lord for the insight you have shared with me... The reason also for this note is your wonderful article on Philippians.”

From Oklahoma:

"I received the *Searchlight* for October '07. In it I found such false teaching that I cannot have the book come into my home. This is about the article "*Getting Things Straight*" from *Our Great Commission, What Is It?*...My advice to you is: You better read again the commission given by our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20. That commission is for the whole world. You will have to give an account to Him one day for the error you are sending to those who know not the Master of all. May God have mercy on you."

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From Michigan:

"I have been involved in the charismatic movement for many years with many questions unanswered, but since being involved with Berean study I have moved away from this thinking."

From Indiana:

"I have conducted many personal research quests, using the *Searchlight* as a guide, and much growth has been given by the Spirit."

From Illinois:

"The *Searchlight* has been coming to Mrs. William...even before I married Bill (perhaps to his grandmother), and I'm still happily reading it, even though Bill died in 2000."

From Washington:

"I am always excited to receive your *Searchlight*. Your literature is as a letter to me. My family is gone or distant, so none write or visit. I need grace believers in my life." (Welcome to the family!—RK).

From the Internet:

"I'm so thankful to God because He opened my eyes of understanding about the gospel of the grace of God. The book *Things That Differ* helped me understand about Prophecy and Mystery. I belonged to a Pentecostal organization and there were many things I couldn't explain because some of our belief was confusing. I used to be post-trib, but now I know the Rapture is under the dispensation of Grace, and that the end of this dispensation is when the kingdom program will continue."

From Kansas:

"Keep the presses hot. Good Bible study is a must if we want to keep growing."

From Wyoming:

"Sorry I couldn't help financially in June and July—medicine!"

From Florida:

"My time in prison has ended. I understand the importance of giving, so expect donations and offerings from me soon. If I had never come to prison, I may never have heard of you and I will certainly tell others."

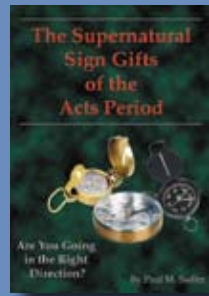
"These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." —Acts 17:11

Booklets by Paul M. Sadler



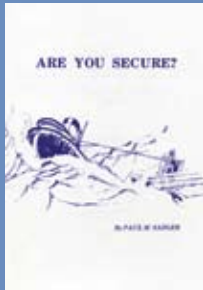
The Institution of Marriage

A 70-page handbook on how to live happily ever after in spite of two fallen natures living under the same roof. Furthermore, it is until “death do us part,” not ’til “debt do us part.” Young and old alike should be interested to know more about God’s original *blueprint* for marriage.



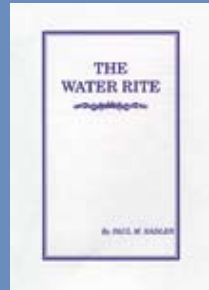
The Supernatural Sign Gifts of the Acts Period

Many are crying “*Back to Pentecost!*” with its signs and wonders. This unsound teaching has so swept the Church that for many, “speaking in tongues” has become the standard of true spirituality. This 65-page booklet shows how Paul’s gospel is the answer to this delusion.



Are You Secure?

This 9-page booklet was born of the need to comfort the hearts of those who were in despair and for one reason or another thought they could lose their salvation.



The Water Rite

In Paul’s day the “Bone of Contention” was circumcision, however, today it is *water baptism*. May this 9-page booklet be used to help bring order out of chaos.

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Paul Beseches the Church (Part 4)

Romans 16:17

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

In bringing his letter to the believers at Rome to a close, the Apostle Paul urged them to take notice of those who were divisive. This warning was against being led astray by those who denied the teachings of Paul and were promoting contrary doctrines. Whenever these people were found out, they were to be identified and avoided.

Early in Paul's ministry there were already those who were coming into the churches that he had established and causing problems by perverting the Gospel of the Grace of God. Their corrupted teachings were evidently causing divisions within the churches. They would come in and attempt to teach doctrines that were contradictory to the Grace Message that Paul taught. The Apostle knew well the danger that these kinds of people posed to the Church. In his letters to Rome and Corinth, he dealt with the antinomians who claimed that believers should continue living in sin because they were under grace (Rom. 3:5-8; 6:1-2, 15; I Cor. 5:1-13). In his letter to the Galatians, he had to deal with the opposite extreme of legalism (Gal. 5:1-6) that was brought in by those who wanted to go back under the Law.

It is sad, but true, that some people come into grace churches claiming to believe the Grace Message but, after gaining a position of influence, they begin working towards changing the doctrine of the church. Paul tells us

that those who would divide a church by denying what he taught "*serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly*" (Rom. 16:18a). In other words, they are not concerned with the spiritual welfare of those in the church but are looking out for their own material gain and self-interests.

"And by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (innocent)" (Rom. 16:18b). These are smooth-talkers who lure the unsuspecting into their trap with persuasive reasoning (cf. Col. 2:4,8). The trouble is that their reasoning is according to the wisdom of men rather than the wisdom of God. This is the direct opposite of the Apostle Paul's method, which was to preach nothing but "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified...not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (see I Cor. 2:1-5).

This is one of the many warnings that Paul included in his letters to churches (see II Cor. 11:3-4; Gal. 1:6-10; 2:4, etc.). If we who know the wonderful message of grace do not take heed of Paul's warning, and do as he has entreated us to do in guarding the Grace Message against those who "*cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine*" of the Apostle of Grace, the Grace Message will be lost to the next generation.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Grace Church: *Berean Bible Church* of Denver is excited to promote the Gospel of the Grace of God. Pastor Ron Fox and the people of BBC would like to extend a warm welcome to any and all Grace believers to fellowship with them, and join them in their proclamation of “*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.*” You can read all about this multi-ethnic assembly on Page 12.

Another New Grace Church: *Big Horn Grace Chapel* of Cody, Wyoming is up and running, with Todd Bentley shepherding the flock. Todd is an online student at *St. Louis Theological Seminary*, and is supported in the ministry by his wife Shirley, their son Tyler and daughter Alyssa. Also sharing in the ministry are Bill and Virginia Bien, former members of Pastor Dennis Moore’s *Grace Chapel of West Laramie*. For more information, contact Pastor Bentley at 307-645-3229, or Bill & Virginia at 307-527-6317.

It’s not too late to register for the Spring semester at *Berean Bible Institute*, but you must act *now!* Classes begin Monday, January 21st, close on the heels of the BBI Missions Conference to be held January 18th & 19th. Why not determine *today* to be a part of the next generation of Grace missionaries, pastors and teachers. For more information, e-mail BBI at bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org or call them at 262-644-5504.

A Special Meeting of the *Second Sunday Fellowship* will be held on the third Sunday in January, to enable special guest speaker Pastor Dick Ware to share the Word with the brethren of SSF. Pastor Ware will be in town to attend a board meeting for *Things To Come Mission*, prompting the flexible folks at SSF to reschedule their monthly meeting for January 20th. For more information, call Mike & Roberta Karnes at (317) 984-4799, or e-mail them at r.karnes@insightbb.com.

Grace Bible Conference: *Grace Bible Fellowship* of Pinellas Park, Florida, is planning a weekend gathering that will feature Pastor Curt Crist. If your schedule is open for Friday, February 29 and Saturday, March 1, contact Allen and Linda Rooks for further information: 727-992-0561.

Grace Bible Study: Eastern Iowa readers will be glad to learn of a group of Grace believers who meet on Sunday mornings in Mechanicsville. For more information, call Frank Dohmen at 563-432-7147.

*Our cover lighthouse photo was taken by Ken and Grace Frizane. The *Ludington North Pierhead Lighthouse* is located in Ludington, Michigan. The base of the 57 foot light was constructed in the shape of the bow of a large ship to fight off waves and ice.

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that brought it down to man! Oh, the mighty gulf that God
did span At Calvary!”
—William R. Newell

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