

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

September 2011



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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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From the President's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

This month is the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack on the *World Trade Center* in New York City. Like Pearl Harbor, 9/11 will live in infamy. As the songwriter wrote shortly after the tragedy, "Where were you on that September day?" The enormous loss of life in the attack brought our nation together to mourn and pray for the families who lost loved ones.

Such times cause us to pause to wonder how many of those who perished in the disaster had been reached for Christ. D. L. Moody shared an experience he had in this regard that he never forgot. This is the story as told by Mr. Moody about a physician and his good friend who was a merchant:

"When the physician that attended to him saw there was no chance for him here, he thought it was time to talk about Christ to the dying man. There are a great many Christians just like this physician. They wait until a man is just entering the other world, just till he is about nearing the throne, till the sands of life are about to run out, till the death rattle is in his throat, before they commence to speak of Christ.

"The physician stepped up to the dying merchant and began to speak of Jesus, the beauties of Christianity, and the salvation He offered to all the world. The merchant listened quietly to him and then asked him, 'How long have you known of these things?'

"I have been a Christian since I came from the East,' he replied.

"You have been a Christian so long and have known all this, and have been in my store every day. You've been in my house; have associated with me; you knew all these things, and why didn't you tell me before?"

"The doctor went home and retired to rest, but could not sleep. The question of the dying man rang in his ears. He could not explain why he had not spoken before, but saw that he had neglected his responsibility. He went back to his dying friend, intending to speak to him, but the merchant only replied in a sad whisper, 'Oh, why didn't you tell me before?'"

Brethren, we oftentimes act like the physician. We put off sharing Christ with someone until another day. But tomorrow may be too late. Remember 9/11! If you feel you might fumble around to find the right words, give the one you're witnessing to a gospel tract. A good start would be to use the *Epitaph* or *Rescued* tracts, which come in packages of 25 and 100 here at the *Berean Bible Society*. Share Christ with someone today!

In His service,

Paul M. Sadler, President



You Can't Get By With This

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

One of Pastor Stam's favorite jokes went something like this:

Teacher: "Johnny, what's the difference between a pronoun and a preposition?"

Johnny: "Yeah, that's what I say, *what's the difference!*"

Despite Johnny's indifference, we know there is a great deal of difference between pronouns and prepositions! These parts of speech are important, especially when it comes to Bible study. For instance, Pastor Stam once wrote:

"Not once does Paul in his epistles teach that members of the Body of Christ are baptized with or in the Spirit."

In response to this, we sometimes get letters asking about this verse:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." (I Cor. 12:13).

But a close look will reveal an important difference in the preposition used in each case. The Apostle Paul taught that believers today are baptized "by" the Spirit, but Pastor Stam doesn't say we're *not* baptized by the Spirit, he says we are not baptized "with" the Spirit. No contradiction here!

Speaking of Christ, John the Baptist predicted:

"He shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 3:11).

This prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, where "they were all filled *with* the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). It is important to notice that Christ is the Baptizer here, and that He baptized people *with* the Spirit. This is often confused with I Corinthians 12:13, but in this passage *the Spirit* is the Baptizer, baptizing people into the Body. That's quite different than what happened at Pentecost, where the Lord was the Baptizer, baptizing people *with* the Spirit, enabling them to speak in tongues.

This explains why believers today are not able to speak in languages they never studied, as they did at Pentecost, for we do not have their baptism. But if we do not have their baptism, we must also conclude that at Pentecost they did not have our baptism. That is, we are not baptized by Christ with the Spirit, and they were not baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ.

We realize this runs contrary to the common teaching that the Church began at Pentecost, where it is said that believers were first baptized into the Body, but we believe the difference in prepositions used in these passages is just one of many evidences that the Body of Christ began later, with the raising up of Paul.

You just can't get by with mixing *with* and *by*!

A photograph of a man in profile, wearing a blue sweater over a light blue shirt and a yellow tie, sitting and reading a book. He is positioned in front of a window with light coming through. The image is the background for the top half of the page.

Reflections on Philippians

By Cornelius R. Stam

The grace that has brought light and blessing and salvation to so many hearts and lives, and has changed so many homes, the grace that gives us the joy and the assurance of life everlasting and glory to come—that's the grace we proclaim through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. And as you may know, the Apostle Paul was the great apostle of this grace. To him was committed the dispensation of the grace of God, and the gospel, or the good news, of the grace of God. His epistles are filled with this grace, and the epistle to the Philippians is one of the most refreshing and uplifting of all of Paul's epistles. Let's begin by considering how the church got started.

THE MACEDONIAN CALL

You will perhaps recall how the Philippian church was founded.

It is actually the story of how the gospel was brought to Europe, and so to us here in the United States. We find the account in Acts 16, where Paul received a vision from the Lord. He saw a man from Macedonia asking him to come over into Macedonia to help his people.

Now this, so far as we know, was the last call to missionary work by a supernatural manifestation, but it does teach us a great lesson. When Paul got to Macedonia, he did not find people begging for the gospel of the grace of God! What he *did* find was a great need and a wonderful opportunity to make the blessed message known. The vision of the pleading Macedonian represented this need and this opportunity, and we believers in Christ should learn from this. The masses all about us are not pleading for the good news of God's grace, but how deeply they

need it, and how great is our opportunity to make it known to the multitudes with whom we come into contact. This need and this opportunity then is what places upon us as believers the responsibility to toil and sacrifice so that the lost may have the gospel clearly presented to them.

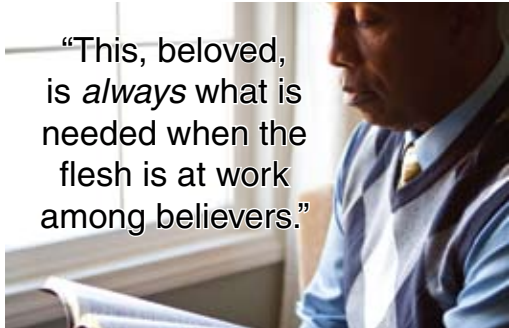
PAUL'S ANSWER TO THE CALL

Well, you will recall how Paul and his companions got to Macedonia and found a few women praying by the riverside, and began talking with them about the things of God. As Paul talked, God opened the heart of one woman, who in turn opened her house for regular services, and so the wonderful work at Philippi was begun! Sad to say, many a pastor, many an evangelist even, has hesitated to begin witnessing in a small way like this; they want large audiences right off. But God does not generally work in this way, nor should we be discouraged with small audiences. It is God's way to use the weak things to confound the things that are mighty. How many great churches have begun with small home Bible classes!

And thus among the few women to whom Paul ministered, there was one whose heart the Lord opened. Don't forget that phrase, for here we find the real beginning of the great church at Philippi: one woman whose heart the Lord opened. God then blessed the apostle's ministry, for as he continued to bear witness to Christ and to His wonderful saving grace, more and more were added to the company.

PAUL SUFFERS FOR THE CALL

Next he was called upon to *suffer* for Christ, but oh how God blessed this! For doing nothing more than delivering a poor demon possessed girl from her terrible bondage, Paul, along with Silas, was dragged to the magistrates, who tore their clothes off their backs and had them scourged and thrown into prison. The jailer then joined in their rough treatment, throwing them into the dungeon and fastening their feet in stocks. But that night God did another wonderful thing; the jailer himself was saved and his whole household. And so the company at Philippi grew, until now as Paul writes to them they were so large that they needed a staff of bishops and deacons.

A photograph of a man in a light blue dress shirt and a dark tie, looking down at an open book. The image is partially obscured by a white text box on the left side.

“This, beloved,
is *always* what is
needed when the
flesh is at work
among believers.”

Paul later wrote the Thessalonians about how he and Silas had suffered and had been shamefully treated at Philippi (I Thes. 2:2), and in II Corinthians 11:29 he asked, “Who is weak, and I am not weak; who is offended, and I burn not.” Ah, but this suffering had knit the hearts of Paul and the believers there very closely together. In his letter to them, he says, “For unto you it is given

in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on His name, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me.” That suffering had drawn them very closely together, and now the apostle could encourage them, reminding them of what a privilege it was to suffer for Him.

THE RESULT OF THE SUFFERING

As a result of what they had been through together, this church was very loyal, very faithful to Paul; he was dear to their hearts. He tells them,

“I thank God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:3-5).

Isn't that beautiful? He rejoiced every time he thought of them! And then in the fourth chapter, he commends them by saying that in his later ministry no church had communicated with him concerning giving and receiving, but “ye only.” The Philippians had again and again sought him out in his travels to find out where he was, so as to send messengers with gifts to help him personally and in his work.

Here we should mention that the Philippian epistle is one of a group of three of Paul's prison epistles: Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians; and these three epistles have a very interesting connection. Ephesians has to do with the body of Christ, that is, the Church, the Body, and its relation to Christ the Head. Colossians on the other hand has to do basically

with Christ the Head, and His relation to the Body. But Philippians, the book between, has to do with the relation of the members of the Body to each other.

PAUL'S REASON FOR WRITING

As Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, he was in prison at Rome, and the obvious occasion for this letter was to thank them for a generous gift that they had sent him by the hand of Epaphras. But there was a deeper purpose. There had been a rift, a breach, among the Philippian believers, and he wrote this letter in order to heal that breach, if possible, with God's help, and bring about again the enjoyment of the oneness they had once enjoyed. In Philippians, Paul seeks to present Christ in such a way that they would all be wrapped up in Him, so that all selfishness would disappear. This, beloved, is *always* what is needed when the flesh is at work among believers. They need more of Christ, they need to see more of His glory and His grace.

Now the apostle's plea to these Philippians is based on the believer's oneness with Christ and so with each other, and in it we learn many wonderful lessons about the relationship of believers to each other. We learn how we should act, and what we should be as Christian assemblies. And we learn what we should be and how we should act as individual believers as well.

Now this brings us to a couple of points that we should be careful to understand about the epistle to the Philippians.

THE BASIS OF OUR ONENESS

First, our oneness as believers is not determined by our conduct. Believers are one *in Christ alone*, by His death. This is not an ideal to which we might attain, it is a divine reality. Do you remember what Paul wrote to the Romans? He told them, in effect, “Don’t you know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?” (Rom. 6:3). Now be sure to get the sense, the feel of that statement.¹

What does it mean to be baptized into Christ? Oh please, don’t put a drop of water into that passage, for this passage does not refer to water baptism. It is rather much like I Corinthians 12:13: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” Just as the salt becomes part of that meatloaf, just as the sugar becomes part of the cake itself, just so the believer has been baptized into the Body of Christ.



This happened by the believer being baptized into *Christ*. How could you be baptized into the Body of Christ without being baptized into Christ Himself? But get this in Romans 6:3 now: “Don’t you

know that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ, were baptized into His death?” The cross is *always* the meeting place; you never will become a member of the Body of Christ without first meeting Christ at the cross, and look at the cross and say, as it were, “Why is *He* dying there? This is not His death He is dying; the wages of sin is death. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned. This is not His death He is dying; He had no sin; He was not a sinner. It is *my death* He is dying!”

And my dear friend, the moment you see and acknowledge this you are baptized into His death. You say, “That is *my death* He is dying.” That’s what Paul says, and you believe it. And so you become one with Christ, just as He became one with you in His death. He saw you and me in our sins, and He said, “I’ll go down to Calvary, and I will die the death of the cross and pay for their sins.” And so He came to Calvary, and as He says in Luke 12:50 in effect: “I have a baptism to be baptized with ye know not of.” He was speaking of His death. He was baptized into our death, if you will. And now as we acknowledge that it was actually *our* death He was dying, we become one with Him. And so we are not only reconciled to God, but as Ephesians 2:16 says, “we are reconciled to God *in one body by the cross*.” What a blessed truth!

This, beloved, is the basis for our insistence that there should

not be all sorts of divisions in the Body of Christ, that we are one body in Christ, and that the only way that we can *enjoy* this unity is to *recognize* it. In Adam there is nothing but division; from Adam there came nothing but division. His first two children were divided, and Cain killed Abel. All those who came from Adam have ever since been divided. Oh, they might get together on one particular issue or a certain cause, but basically they are all divided. All the children of men think differently, they disagree on many subjects, even the most devoted husband and wife disagree on many things. But in Colossians 1:21,22, we read this:

“And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath God reconciled in the Body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight.”

So God has reconciled us, as in Christ He came to Calvary and bore our sins in the flesh, died for them physically, as well as His soul was concerned. So believers are united in Christ, they are reconciled to God in Christ, and so they become one body in Christ. Galatians 3:26-28 are verses that are just beautiful here: “For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ.” What blessed oneness this is!

Now beloved, this does not depend on our conduct, it depends

upon our relationship to Christ. God now sees the simplest, humblest believer *in Christ*. We have been made one with Him, we have been baptized into Christ and His Body. Thus only in Christ can we enjoy true unity and fellowship. Apart from Christ man cannot know God, they can't get to know God apart from faith in Christ.



Apart from Christ, men cannot even know each other! The human ego always gets in the way. Men outside of Christ have not yet come to the end of themselves. They dress up that show window, as it were, when they mingle with their fellows. When they mingle with others, they try to make it appear that they are a little better, or greater, or something different than they really are.

But true Christians, true believers in Christ, came to Calvary and pled for forgiveness of their sins because they were at the end of their rope. We have

acknowledged that we were lost and condemned, hell-bound sinners. That's why we alone can enjoy true fellowship; we have come to the end of ourselves, and there is no longer any need to put on or dress up that show window. I don't say that no Christians do that, I say they *need not* do it, and when they don't do it, they can best enjoy true unity and fellowship with other believers.

RECOGNIZING OUR ONENESS

The next point that we should be careful to understand about the epistle to the Philippians is this: We cannot take this oneness for granted, for although believers are one in Christ and have been baptized by the Spirit into one body, we may be far from *experiencing* this blessed unity. As we said a moment ago, we can only experience it in the measure that we recognize it. It is our duty as believers to enjoy this unity by faith, recognizing every moment of every day that, since we are one with Christ, we are also one with one another. And that is the basic lesson that the epistle to the Philippians teaches.

BECOMING PART OF THIS ONENESS

But now a closing word to those who may not be sure of salvation. You may be a member of an earthly church organization, but you do not feel yourself a member of the true Bible church, the one body of believers all over the world. Well, let's go back to Romans 6:3 again: "Don't you know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ

were baptized into His death?" Have you come to the place where you have acknowledged that the death that Christ died at Calvary was not His death, that He had no death to die, that He came to die your death and to overcome death for you? See Him there; acknowledge that this death is yours.

This is more than substitution. Substitution may make a man angry. His daughter may be at school, some other girl may have done something very wicked, but somehow has managed to turn all the blame on this man's daughter and he finds it out. It makes him angry. Oh sure, his daughter was the substitute for that other girl, but actually he's going to say: "Why should my daughter bear the blame for what this girl has done? She did it." And that is the kind of substitution you find in the Old Testament, beloved.


Ah, but not with Paul. This is not only substitution, this is more. This is *identification*, this is *representation*; this is Christ committing to the cross *willingly*, voluntarily, for us. He came to do a work in our behalf, to offer Himself in sacrifice for our sins. He did it, and when He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

And then as Hebrews 10 puts it: "Every priest"—that is, every *Old Testament* priest—"standeth daily, ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin. But this man, when He had offered² one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:11,12). And then

Hebrews 10:14 says, “By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Ah, my dear friend, trust in that wonderful Saviour *now*, if you have never done so. Believe this love story! After all, this gospel of the grace of God is a wonderful love story. We might take you and by logical arguments back you into a corner so that finally you say: “All right, I give up, you’re right and I am wrong.” But that wouldn’t save you; you must believe that in this Bible we have the word of God with the only reasonable solution that has ever been given to the sin problem. Some pagan leaders have said, “Try your best,” but even if you try your best, you have already failed God in the past. Some say

God is forgiving, and He is, but on what basis can He forgive you? Is He not a just judge? Must He not punish sin? The Bible in the gospel of the grace of God through the apostle Paul, the Bible *alone* gives us a reasonable, logical plan of salvation.

Christ died for our sins; He came into this world, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Ah my dear unsaved friend, believe it! Believe it *now!* 

Endnotes

1. We often ask God, “Oh Lord, give me *the sense*, the *meaning* of this passage.”
2. They are not offering *Him* in sacrifice here; that’s the prophetic view, that’s the Old Testament view, that’s even the view we find in the gospel in early Acts. Ah, *He* is offering the sacrifice here. He is doing the offering.



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Dates: October 8-9, 2011

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UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES



By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

“A university student was seen with a large *K* printed on his T-shirt. When someone asked him what the *K* stood for, he said, ‘Confused.’

“‘But,’ the questioner replied, ‘you don’t spell ‘confused’ with a *K*.’

“The student answered, ‘You don’t know how confused I am.’”¹

When it comes to understanding the times in which we are living, the Church is just about as confused as this young university student. The vast majority of believers today are convinced that the catastrophic events foretold by our Lord in the Olivet Discourse are unfolding before our very eyes (Matt. 24:3-8). These, they say, are “the beginning of sorrows” preceding the Lord’s coming.

With this in mind, here’s a brief list of recent events they believe is evidence that these are the End Times:

- Hurricane Katrina is but one example of the increase in tropical

storms in the Gulf. The storm hit the Louisiana coast on August 29, 2005 leaving 1,800 dead in its aftermath. It was the strongest hurricane ever to strike that part of the country, so strong that the storm surge overwhelmed the levee system, nearly flooding the entire city of New Orleans.

- On March 11th of this year, a devastating earthquake unexpectedly struck Japan. The 9.0 magnitude quake lasted about 6 minutes, which probably seemed like an eternity for those who actually experienced it. The earthquake was so powerful that it moved the mainland of Japan 8 feet to the east. According to seismologists, it was one of the strongest quakes ever recorded since they began keeping records in 1900. This dramatic shifting of the tectonic plates deep beneath the Pacific produced a *tsunami* that swept over the northern islands of Japan, working death and destruction on an unprecedented

scale. It is estimated that 10,000 perished from the quake and *tsunami*.

- News footage of the recent Arizona sandstorm, if you didn't know better, certainly looked like a doomsday event. The sandstorm, which ascended nearly a mile into the atmosphere, eerily moved across the city of Phoenix, bringing everything to a standstill. This was followed by a heat wave that nearly gripped the entire country with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees. It was so hot in Oklahoma and Texas that a reporter from one of the national news agencies cooked a steak to *medium well* on the dashboard of his car. That's hot!



While all these events were horribly tragic beyond comprehension, they were not in fulfillment of the things predicted in the Scriptures known as the End of Days. These were merely natural disasters that were the result of living in a sin-cursed world. In addition, we must bear in mind that, according to the Spirit of God, creation is in a state of decline which oftentimes contributes to these incidents.

“And, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They

shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Heb. 1:10-12).

Most of us probably have garments we feel so comfortable wearing that we often overlook the fact that a change is long overdue. Perhaps we've made a few alterations or sewed up the holes in the pockets over the course of time, but we find ourselves eventually faced with the inevitable. It's a fact of life that all things are running down and wearing out. After the fall, God sovereignly instituted a universal law that scientists call “the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law states that all systems, if left to themselves, tend to become degraded or disordered.”² This tendency is usually called *entropy*.

Thus science and Scripture agree that God's creation is showing signs of gradual deterioration. For example, the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere is slowly decreasing. This is why you find yourself applying sunscreen more frequently, which is now up to 100 SPF, to protect yourself from the harmful ultra-violet rays of the sun. Failure to do so leaves you vulnerable to painful sunburn and even skin cancer. We give thanks that when we enter the eternal state, God will renovate the present heavens and earth so that they will no longer be subject to decline and ruin due to man's sin (II Pet. 3:12,13).

So the cataclysmic events we have all been witnessing over the past several years are due to the

Curse and the aging of the earth. And I think it is fair to say that these occurrences are probably going to become more frequent and severe in the future. However, these events are **not** in fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse, as many claim.

If you compare the Olivet Discourse with the Seal Judgments in Revelation Chapter 6, you will find they perfectly match one another (Matt. 24:1-8 cf. Rev. 6:1-17). This is a clear indication that the events of the Olivet Discourse—the wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes—will all take place in the coming Tribulation. In that day, they will be the direct result of divine intervention, as God pours out His wrath. There will be absolutely no question in the minds of those who fall under these judgments that they are coming from the hand of God (see Revelation 6:15-17). These are the *End Times* the Lord spoke of in the Olivet Discourse that will precede His Second Coming to the earth.

So then, the current turmoil in the Middle East, the famines in Africa, and the flesh-eating disease reported in Europe and America are all products of living in man's day, not the fulfillment of prophecy! We will concede, though, that these things could well be setting the stage for the future day of the Lord when God will resume His prophetic program, after the Rapture of the Church.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE LAST DAYS OF GRACE

To have a proper understanding of the times for the age of

grace, we must narrow our studies to Paul's writings. It is the will of God that every member of the Body of Christ be equipped and prepared as we live in light of His coming for the Church. If you were properly equipped with the Word, rightly divided, earlier this year, your faith was not shaken by the prediction that the end of the world was going to take place on Saturday, May 15, 2011 at 6 PM.

Here are a number of points that we all need to be aware of as we serve and wait.

The Mystery of Iniquity

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way” (II Thes. 2:7).

Shortly after the gospel of the grace of God was given to Paul, Satan set into motion an evil scheme known as the “mystery of iniquity.” Satan's ultimate goal is to undermine all forms of God-ordained authority and bring the world to a state of *lawlessness*. As we approach the Lord's coming for us, this unrelenting attack is sure to intensify. Satan has already successfully targeted three areas and the damage has nearly decimated our generation.

The *home* is under siege. God's original plan of authority for the headship of the husband and the role of children, who are commanded to obey their parents, has been pushed aside as old fashioned in favor of one's *rights*. The results have been disastrous, as two out of three marriages now tragically end in divorce. Children rebelliously roam the streets killing one another as law

enforcement stands helplessly by with hands tied by a liberal judicial system. When our country lost its innocence in the Sixties, God's chain of command was broken and we have been suffering the consequences ever since.

The *Church*, as well, has fallen victim to the adversary. Years ago, when the town drunk passed a church building where the saints were meeting, he would pause and tip his hat out of respect. Today, he leaves his beer and wine bottles on our doorstep. But perhaps the most troubling trend we are witnessing is a lack of respect for the Word of God. We lament that praise services are gradually replacing the sound preaching of the Word. Furthermore, believers are turning from the godly counsel of their pastors to godless psychiatrists and psychologists who do not even understand man's most basic problem. Such a disregard for the authority of the Scriptures must surely grieve the heart of God.

Finally, for generations Satan has sought to subvert the authority of *national governments*. His most effective weapons of destruction have been corruption, dishonesty, immorality, and greed. One wonders how much longer things can continue at the present rate with economic collapse, civil wars, starvation, and disease threatening the existence of many nations. The world as we know it is headed on a crash course with the Scriptural reality called the Tribulation, a time which will give new meaning to the word *chaos*.

From the ashes of despair, Satan will introduce the world to the *Great Problem Solver*.

The anti-Christ will have the charisma of a JFK, the intelligence and leadership abilities of a Winston Churchill, the wit of a Mark Twain, the communication skills of a Ronald Reagan, and the knowledge of foreign affairs of a Condoleeza Rice. He will arise from obscurity to become history's most infamous leader. The nations will be mesmerized by his uncanny ability to resolve complex problems and will therefore hastily align themselves with his emerging world empire. For the time being, the Body of Christ is holding back this evil plan of Satan to take over the world, but it is extremely important to be aware of it.

Perilous Times

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent...” (II Tim. 3:1-3).

We also need to be conscious of the fact that, prior to the catching away of the Church, “perilous times shall come.” These will be exceedingly fierce times that will try men's souls. The dispensation of grace began with the Church being persecuted and, in the context that follows, it will end with a persecution of those who stand for the truth (II Tim. 3:11,12). Mark these words and mark them well: The greatest threat to Christianity today isn't Rome, but Islam. Islam has absolutely no tolerance whatsoever for the Jew or the Christian, as current world affairs

demonstrate. But this too must not be confused with the wrath of God that is to come. Once again, any suffering that the true Church may endure before the Rapture will be at the hands of evil men, not God.



The above *trends* that Paul makes reference to that will characterize men in the last days must not be confused with miraculous signs. There are *no* signs, miracles, or wonders that will precede the Lord's return for the Body of Christ. There are, however, certain *trends* that will be common among men and, sad to report, will also be true of many believers who live worldly lives. A *trend* conveys the concept of going in a general direction over a period of time. For example, gas prices have been trending upward over the past year. In other words, it's a gradual process and, although there have been momentary price "dips," the overall direction is *up*.

Of the eighteen adjectives that Paul uses to describe men in the last days, we have selected one from the many to demonstrate our point. The term "incontinent" is defined in the original language as being "without self-control."

The sense is that there will be an "anything-goes attitude," whether it's lying, swearing, sex, partying, illicit drugs, binge-drinking, etc. Extreme behavior will be the order of the day. But haven't all these trends always been prevalent since the dawn of time? True, but Paul is revealing that they will intensify to a point never before seen in the history of mankind.

Beware!

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Tim. 4:1).


"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13).

In the last days of grace, there will be two areas for which to be especially watchful in regard to those who minister the Word. Paul warns us that some, but not all, will depart from the faith that was once near and dear to their hearts. They will abandon sound doctrine that was first delivered to us by the Apostle Paul and will instead give heed to seducing spirits. As they teach things that are contrary to Paul's gospel, it will cause a great deal of confusion among the brethren, which is a masterful ploy of Satan, who is the author of confusion. But why would these teachers knowingly depart from the truth? The reasons are many and varied: notoriety for discovery of a so-called new truth, acceptance among mainstream Christendom, larger numbers, and other temptations of fleshly, earthly gain.

The level of confusion increases dramatically when we add ministers who *intentionally* deceive the unsuspecting to build a utopian ministry. Paul says they have “a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof” (II Tim. 3:5). In other words, they will deny the preaching of the Cross, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:18). Those who come under their spell will have their ears tickled with inspirational messages, but there will be a *deafening silence* when it comes to the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, or Christ’s precious blood.

The apostle is clear to all who will listen when he says, “from such turn away.” If you fail to do so, you will be swept into either their unsound teaching or a web of deception. Beware! Paul’s solution to avoid these dangers is really quite simple: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been

assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (II Tim. 3:14). In a nutshell, follow Paul as he followed Christ. A well-rounded understanding of Paul’s epistles will be a safeguard against error and will protect you from being misled or succumbing to the clever schemes of men.

In my lifetime, I have personally witnessed an acceleration of the things outlined here by Paul. With these trends in mind, keep looking up, for the Lord may be coming soon! This is why it is so important to have our spiritual roots go deeply into the fertile soil of the Word, rightly divided. It will ensure a better understanding of the times in which we live. 

Endnotes

1. Author unknown; www.bible.org.
2. Dr. Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*: (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), pg. 127.



Central Indiana Regional Bible Conference

Location: *Das Dutchman Essenhaus Conference Center*
240 US Hwy. 20, Middlebury, Indiana

Date: Saturday, November 5, 2011

Guest Speakers:

Paul M. Sadler, *Berean Bible Society*
Joel McGarvey, *Bible Doctrines To Live By*

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What Happened in 1948?

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

A little over 63 years ago, something happened that caused a great deal of excitement in the Christian world. In the wake of Hitler's horrific extermination of Jews during the Second World War, a sympathetic world elected to give a homeland to the Jews that survived the holocaust, and suddenly the modern state of Israel was born on the site of the land God promised them thousands of years ago. Prior to that, while Jews could be found interspersed among all the peoples of the world, they had no land they could call their own.

The Stir

This action caused quite a stir among Christians who knew the Bible well, for many considered it the fulfillment of a Bible prophecy that the Lord made when the twelve apostles asked Him, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" (Matt. 24:3). In response, He replied:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh;

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:32,33).

The apostles had asked for a sign of the Lord's coming, and the Lord responded by saying that the blossoming of the fig tree would let them know that "it" (His coming) was near. Since the fig tree is a well-known symbol of Israel in Scripture, many in 1948 concluded that the Lord's coming must be near, since the fig tree of Israel had seemingly put forth her leaves and budded as a country in the spring of that year. In the decades that have followed, this understanding has been a foundational tenet of many prophecy preachers. With this

in mind, we would like to discuss whether or not our Lord's prophecy was legitimately fulfilled in 1948.

It is our conviction that we are living in the dispensation of the mystery, and that not a single prediction found in God's prophetic Scriptures has been fulfilled for over 1900 years. It is our further conviction that God's prophetic clock will not again begin to tick until the Rapture puts an end to this unprophesied age. Those who share this conviction will readily conclude with us, on this basis alone, that 1948 could not have been a fulfillment of the Lord's fig tree prophecy.

It is also our conviction that using 1948 to interpret the budding of the fig tree fails to consider Luke's version of the parable, where the Lord says, "behold the fig tree, *and all the trees*" (21:29-31). With these additional words in mind, we cannot make the return of Israel to her ancient land to be a sign of the Lord's coming unless the people of *all other* nations return to the site of *their* ancient homelands as well.¹

Of course, it cannot be denied that in Matthew's gospel the Lord appears to focus on the fig tree. If here He was attaching any significance to



the fig tree over and above the other trees mentioned in Luke's gospel, we believe the correct interpretation of this parable lies in a correct understanding of the significance of the fig tree in Scripture.

The Trees of Israel

While we agree that the fig tree is a Bible symbol of God's favored nation, there are actually *four* trees that symbolize Israel in Scripture: the olive, the fig, the vine, and the bramble (Judges 9:8-15), and each of these trees represents her in a separate and distinct sense.

First, the vine tree (Ezek. 15:2,6) represents *national* Israel, i.e., the nation as a whole. Psalm 80:8 says that God "brought a *vine* out of Egypt," and we know He ripped the entire nation of Israel, consisting of believers and unbelievers,² out from under the hand of Pharaoh.

Next, the olive tree represents *spiritual* Israel. We know this because our apostle Paul affirms that we Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree (Rom. 11:17). Here it is important to notice he does not say we have been grafted into the vine tree, for we have not been made part of *the nation* of Israel. We are not Israel, as many insist. We have rather been grafted into the *spiritual* life of Israel, "and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree" (Rom. 11:17).

Yet another tree that depicts Israel is the bramble (Judges 9:14,15). The bramble represents *apostate* Israel, "for of thorns men do not gather

figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes” (Luke 6:44). No spiritual fruit for God can ever be gathered from apostate Israel.

The Fig Tree

This brings us to the fig tree, which represents *religious* Israel. Adam and Eve sewed *fig leaves* together to make aprons, in a vain attempt to try to *cover* their sin. This is the very definition of religion; it is man’s attempt to cover up his sin. The only *legitimate* religion in all of human history was the sacrifice system that God gave to Israel, which *covered* their sins until such time Christ died for them.³

This interpretation helps us understand the symbolism behind a rather peculiar event that took place right before the cross. We read that when the Lord “hungered” He saw a fig tree in the way, but “found nothing thereon, but leaves only” (Matt. 21:19). This was symbolic of how 1500 years of animal sacrifices in Israel had failed to produce the kind of fruit that God was looking for in the nation. As a result, the Lord cursed the fig tree, saying, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever” (Matt. 21:19). While in time past animal sacrifices had produced spiritual fruit in Israel under the Law, the old covenant of the Law was about to be replaced by the new covenant, a covenant that began with the sacrifice of Christ (Jer. 31:31; Matt. 26:28). The Book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to assure Israel that the blood of animal sacrifices had been replaced by the one sacrifice of Christ.

With all this in mind, it is easy to understand the parable of the fig tree. When the Lord cursed the fig tree and it withered away, this depicted the end of Israel’s sacrifice system. With the parable that was given shortly after, He was letting the people of Israel know that if they were to see the cursed and withered tree of their religious sacrifice system begin to flourish again, this would serve as a sign to her that His coming was near.

All of this is significant when we remember that, in the Tribulation, *the antichrist* will rebuild Israel’s temple and reinstate her sacrifice system! We know he will rebuild the temple since Paul says he will someday sit in the temple and demand to be worshipped (II Thes. 2:4). We know he will also reinstate Israel’s religion because, in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week, he will cause the sacrifices that he himself restored to cease (Dan. 9:27) by dying and rising from the dead (Rev. 13:3) and claiming to be the fulfillment of these typical sacrifices.

Conclusion


Thus the fulfillment of the Lord’s fig tree parable did not take place in 1948 with the establishment of the nation of Israel in her homeland. It will rather take place after the Rapture, when the fig tree of Israel’s religion again puts forth leaves (with no spiritual fruit, of course). When believers in Israel see this, they will be greatly distressed by what the

antichrist is doing, but greatly comforted by the Lord's promise that the budding of the fig tree signals the nearness of His coming.

This interpretation places the fulfillment of the fig tree prophecy squarely on prophetic ground where it belongs, rather than trying to ascribe a home for it within the confines of the present dispensation of the mystery in 1948. It should be noted here that, had the dispensation of grace not interrupted God's prophetic program, the "generation" in Israel the Lord was addressing in Matthew 24 would have lived to see the antichrist (24:15) and the return of the Lord to defeat him and set up Israel's kingdom (Matt. 24:27-34).

Our Motivation

In closing, we understand that this interpretation might at first take the wind right out of the sails of many saints who believe that what happened in 1948 proves the Second Coming is near, and that the Rapture must therefore be even nearer. We wish to assure all our readers that our intent is not to get God's people to stop "looking for that blessed hope," but rather to look for it on the basis of Pauline verses such as Titus 2:13, Philippians 3:20,21, and II Timothy 4:8. God has always wanted members of the Body of Christ to live as if the Lord might come at any moment, for this has always been the case.

In 1925, a seventeen-year-old boy named Cornelius R. Stam was busily teaching basketry—and the Bible—to boys off the street in his father's city mission. At that time he made a sign with raised letters made of basket reed on an oak background, a sign that says simply: "Perhaps Today." This reminder of our imminent hope now hangs above the conference room door here at *Berean Bible Society*, the organization that young Cornelius went on to establish many years later. Pastor Stam's love for the Lord's appearing was the driving force in his life and ministry, for he lived every moment with eternity in view. God help us to do the same! We can't help but wonder what would happen if every believer who reads these words were likewise to learn to be driven by the realization that every minute of life that we begin might end with each of us standing in the presence of the Savior. 



Endnotes

1. Here the Lord seems to be speaking more generally, saying simply, in effect: "When you see trees bud you know summer is near, so when you see all the things I've predicted in this passage come to pass, you know My coming is near."
2. At no time in Israel's history were they all believers. They were always a "mixed multitude" of believers and unbelievers (Ex. 12:38; Num. 11:4).
3. It is interesting in this regard that the Hebrew word for "atonement" is *kaphar*, which is said to mean *to cover*.

Is It Important Who You Spend Time With?

By Pastor John Fredericksen




Whether we realize it or not, we are all affected by the people with whom we spend time. Their attitudes, philosophies, language, and spirituality (good or bad) have a tendency to rub off on us, even if we don't realize it. The Lord warns us about this in I Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." This isn't true only for young people. It is true for believers of all ages. We might not want to think this could happen to us, but the Lord encourages us not to be deceived about this important principle.

David realized how important it was to surround himself with the right kind of spiritually minded people. His testimony was, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psa. 119:63). He intentionally chose to minimize the time he spent around the ungodly, or only somewhat spiritually minded, and to maximize his time around truly dedicated believers. Doing so gave him continual encouragement to walk after the Lord with a pure heart and not after the ways of the world.

The Apostle Paul must have embraced this principle for living too. As we look through his letters, it is easy to see the close relationship he maintained with many saints who were truly living for the Lord. Luke, Aquilla and Priscilla, Philemon, Titus, and Timothy are only a few he mentions with whom he had consistent fellowship. In contrast, neither Paul nor David spent a great deal of time with the lost, or ungodly, unless it was with ministry in mind.

We are not suggesting that believers cut themselves off from the unsaved or become hermits. We have instruction and examples to the contrary. We learn from II Corinthians 5:20 that "we are ambassadors

for Christ” with the ministry of reconciliation or, in other words, the mission of sharing a clear gospel of grace with all that we can. Similarly, Ephesians 3:9 tells us Paul’s mission was also to “make (or help) all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery.” We too should share this goal of seeking to share with everyone the gospel of grace and the joyous news of God’s secret program of grace that is distinct from Israel and the Mosaic Law. So, we should have a ministry-minded outreach to others.

The proper balance to find should be in still maintaining an outward ministry, yet limiting our time with the lost, unspiritually minded, or even marginally spiritually minded. It is important for us to “be not deceived” about how others influence us and therefore to choose, like David and Paul before us, to make friends and companions of those who are so spiritually minded that we will be continually encouraged in the Lord. Is it important who we spend time with and how much time we spend with them? It certainly is! May God help each of us to cultivate the best kind of friendships: those with dedicated, spiritually minded believers of like precious faith. 

Question Box

“I’m witnessing to my mom, who has questions by the boxcar about Purgatory. Can you help?”

This place where men must go after death to purge their sins is an invention of religion. The word *purgatory* comes from the word *purge*, and the Bible says that Christ “*by Himself* purged our sins” without any help from us (Heb. 1:3).

The Lord told the dying thief, “To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). This is significant, since the inspired Word of God calls this man a thief, and it was his own testimony to the other thief that “we receive the due reward of our deeds” (v. 41). That is, he was admitting he had not been framed or misjudged, but had indeed committed crimes worthy of the death penalty. If there was a Purgatory, this man would have gone there, yet we have the Lord’s word on it that he did not.

If anyone needed to go to Purgatory, it was the carnal Corinthians! Yet Paul told even these sinful believers that they could be “confident” that “to be absent from the body” is “to be present with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8). —Pastor Kurth

Growing Up In Grace BEACON



Growing Up In Grace (GUIG)—*Bible Lessons for Youth*

Back-to-School Special: There was a favorable response to our spring reduced shipping rates. Now, during **the months of August through October**, we will again offer the same rates, just in time to help you with the new school year. We will ship one, two, or three GUIG books for one low rate (either \$4 or \$6, depending on the weight involved). This is a great way to save money. It is also an opportunity to stock up on books. Remember, the middle school books are excellent Bible study and devotional materials for teens and adults at home and school.



Long-Range Plans: There is a dire need for good grace materials for teens, both for middle and high school. GUIG middle school lessons have been very well received and people from various churches and affiliations have found them to be valuable for early teens. However, the lack of similar material for high school indicates to us that we must do something while these teens are still at home. As the Lord provides, our long-range plans include the following:

- **Middle school:** Continue until Book Six is complete (this will take many months), then temporarily shift over to address high school needs.
- **High school:** Surveys are in progress now to determine what teens need and desire to learn from the Bible. If a teenager would like to participate in this survey, please contact GUIG at info@growingupinGrace.com to request survey forms.
- **Junior lessons** (ages 9-11) are being revised to be put into spiral-bound books rather than three-ring binders; look for this in coming months.

We thank you for your continued support and prayers for this youth ministry.

Steve Shober
GUIG Director



Growing Up In Grace

Sunday School Program

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BBS Letter Excerpts

From Georgia:

“Dealing with sin in the life of the believer has been hard for me because of the load of guilt and fear-training I had. I have gradually learned grace and finally, the wonderful truths you teach about right division. It has been such a thrill to have ‘contradictions’ ironed out through the Pauline revelation.”

From Wisconsin:

“We find ourselves looking forward to getting the *Searchlight* each month because it gets us talking and looking up the information in our Bible.”

From Virginia:

“For several years I have enjoyed receiving the *Searchlight*, and following your take on dispensationalism. While I do not concur with every aspect of your dispensational system, I appreciate your separating Scripture truths that apply to Israel and not the Church.” (From a pastor.—Ed).

From Georgia:

“Please send a catalog of materials available. I’m a minister of education in a Baptist church, and always looking for good, Biblical material.”

From Indiana:

“Being a Sunday School teacher and the teacher of two Bible study classes, the *Berean Searchlight* has opened up a more focused study for the truth of God’s Word. I enjoyed your study on water baptism in the May edition.”

From Alaska:

“After my whole life learning about God’s Word, partially in a denominational church, it is so good to see each piece come together so completely and clearly, rightly divided.”

From Facebook:

“I want to thank Pastor Ricky Kurth and the entire *Berean Bible Society*. The Colorado Bible Conference was a true blessing. When the conference ended, no one left their seats. Every single person waited to hear Pastor Kurth answer questions. For all your work in edifying the saints, thank you and praise GOD!” (We enjoyed our time with you all more than we can say!—Ed).

From Florida:

“I grew up in a minister’s home. I thought for years the way to please God and to be a ‘good’ Christian was based on works...or taking part in various man-made rituals....I came to believe and understand that Scripture is rightly divided...and have spent years neglecting the Word....I’m successful by the world’s standards...but I want to know and love the Lord as I did many years ago. I’m writing...for a recommendation as to a sequence of study.”

From Illinois:

“The arguments for the *Baptism for the Dead* interpretation were...powerful....I’ll bet that some guys who didn’t know what they were gonna preach this Sunday do now.”

From Oregon:

“This last month we ordered your GUIG Sunday School lessons to see what BBS had for youth—and we are SO impressed with all of it. Just wish when raising our young there had been such a wonderful foundation. But as we are with grandchildren, will use it now!”

From Pennsylvania:

“Thank you for your last article in the March issue of the *Searchlight*. I really liked it and thought it was interesting to see how you came into the ministry....The part I enjoyed the most was the recognition you gave to Pastor Caslander, and the story of how he helped to change your stance on water baptism.”

From our Inbox:

“Thank you for your answer on foot washing. I knew it was not for us in the age of Grace but you had a much better and more in-depth answer than I could have given.”

From Colorado:

“The knowledge of the grace of God empowers to live for God like nothing else can. I, who for many years was entangled in sin, can certainly testify that knowing one is accepted produces more godliness than trying to be accepted ever will.” (Titus 2:11,12 is still true!—Ed.)

From Florida:

“I read about the passing of your father. Through what you wrote, I have hope that someday, some way, I will find the right words to convince my mom and dad of the truth. I won't quit trying. I am so much less discouraged seeing what you had to say about your dad.”

From Indiana:

“Thank you again for your daily devotionals. As a believer I have read the Bible many, many times, but I must say that as a grace believer of just a couple of years now I am getting so much more out of my daily reading by rightly dividing the Word.”

From Florida:

“Thank you for the copy of *Trials and Temptations*. As you might imagine, life in prison is one BIG trial and temptation.”

From New Mexico:

“Wow, I'm amazed at your willingness to help answer some of the *many* questions my wife and I have.... we have believed in the gospel for awhile...but recently I have been on a quest to figure out why Jesus said some of the things He said that don't quite match up with Paul's gospel... and I think I've found it in dispensationalism.”

From Illinois:

“*Things That Differ* is still my favorite book. It was what opened the door to Paul's letters for me.”

From the Philippines:

“Though I'm not able to give bucks, I am praying for you guys!” (This means so much to us.—Ed.)

From Wisconsin:

“Thank you for faithfully sending this timely, God-honoring periodical. I am guilty of not sending one red cent in years; shame on me. If this were any other magazine, I would have stopped receiving them and my mailbox would be lined with bills and late notices. Thank you for caring. I especially need this now.”

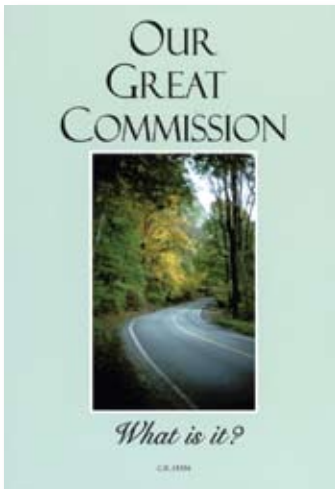


“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”
—Acts 17:11

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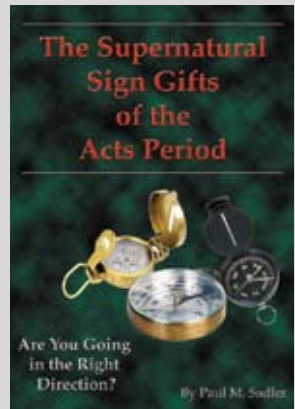
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News and Announcements

Lending Library Update: After many years of faithful service, Sam and Ruth Castrova have handed the reins to our lending library to our good friends Randy and Mickey Leigh. This means that all lending “librarians” should address all future correspondence to them at: 228 N. Main Street, Iron Ridge, Wisconsin 53035, or at randyandmickey@yahoo.com. Welcome aboard, Randy and Mickey!

New President: At their annual summer Bible conference in Cedar Lake, Indiana, the board of directors of *Berean Bible Fellowship* elected a new president, and outgoing president Dick Ware is now lending his full support to President Dave Brown, a long-time member of the BBF board. Dave has stood firmly for the message of grace for nearly thirty years, and is also a member of our board of directors here at BBS. We know he'll appreciate your prayers as he embarks on yet another area of service for the Lord.

New Bible Study: Grace believers who live near Whitewright, Texas, will want to get in touch with Jason Summers and join the happy fellowship that is meeting in his home on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Just email him at js2941@cablone.net, or call him at (972) 569-7184 for the particulars.

Les Feldick Conferences: If you've only seen nationally known Bible teacher Les Feldick on television, the month of October will offer you two opportunities to hear him teach the grace message in person. Jim Miller (jmiller4181@gmail.com) can fill you in about the October 11 conference in Martinsburg, West Virginia, while Jessie Argraves (864-574-2648) will do the same for all those interested in the Arden, North Carolina conference on October 15th.

Our cover this month features a photo taken by Ken and Barb Wardius, a couple who travel extensively in search of unique photo opportunities. You can view some of their impressive gallery of photographs and email them with any questions at their website: www.crestwoodcreek.com.



The *Old Mission Point Lighthouse* is located in Peninsula Township, Michigan. Built in 1870, the light served to warn mariners about the shoals off the point. It stands a few hundred yards south of the 45th parallel north, halfway between the North Pole and the Equator.

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