

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2000





Giving Thanks in All Things



Dearly Beloved,

Lake Michigan has claimed its share of lives over the years. Next to Superior, it is perhaps the most treacherous of the Great Lakes. On September 8, 1860 the *Lady Elgin* found herself in the unmerciful grip of this raging body of water just north of Evanston, Illinois. Though most perished in this terrible disaster, some managed to cling to pieces of wreckage hoping to be rescued. Those who gathered on the shore watched in horror as the tragedy unfolded before their very eyes.

As the waves violently crashed against the breakers, Edward Spencer, a student attending the *Garrett Bible Institute*, saw a woman helplessly fighting for her life. Without regard for his own well-being, he managed to swim out to the young woman and pulled her from the jaws of death. Heroically, he saved the lives of seventeen people that fateful day. Although he slowly recovered from exhaustion and hypothermia, he was left in extremely poor health the rest of his life. Sadly, he never realized his dream of full-time Christian service, but this did not deter him from living an exemplary life for Christ.

When Edward Spencer died at the age of eighty-one, a local newspaper reported that not one of the seventeen survivors he rescued ever returned to personally thank him for saving their lives. Appalling! Yes, but are we not sometimes guilty of the same insensitivity?

Stop and think, how long has it been since you knelt at your bedside to thank God, in your heart of hearts, for saving your soul from the wrath to come? Of course, we should always be grateful for having the eyes of our understanding opened to the Mystery, but are we? We know we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, yet we often fail to thank God for all the blessings we enjoy in Christ.

Then there are those who touch our lives in special ways: a godly wife, a Christian dad, a pastor, or perhaps a brother in Christ. It has been said that gratitude is the memory of the heart. Incidentally, can you remember the last time you put your arm around one of them and said, "Thanks, I just want you to know how much you mean to me!"

This Thanksgiving season may we truly be thankful that God has granted us another day of grace to serve Him. Surely the Lord is good and greatly to be praised!

Yours because of Calvary,
Paul M. Sadler
President

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From Michigan:

"We are very thankful for the *Searchlight* and for knowing God's Word, rightly divided. God's grace is an amazing thing!"

From Iowa:

"We pray that many will come to know Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior through the *Berean Bible Society's* work. We are grateful for God's many blessings, good health, wonderful weather and an extra good garden. We are thankful for Christ's blood shed for our sins and that we know we will spend eternity in Heaven with Christ. Praise His name!"

From California:

"I appreciate your sound and honest doctrine. It is too bad so many explain God's Word away to put forth what fits their plan. Use the remainder of this offering as you are led for our Lord and Savior." (AMEN! Beloved, never apologize for Paul's apostleship and message—it's God's will for the Church today! Ed.)

From Oklahoma:

"A friend loaned me a book of yours, *Things That Differ*. Please send a copy of it and a copy of *Paul, His Apostleship and Message*."

From Virginia:

"I am grateful to acknowledge that although I've been a born again Christian for nearly four years now, I've come to the light of the *revelation of the Mystery*. Studying God's Word, rightly divided is the best and only way to learn sound biblical doctrine according to II Timothy 2:15. I have recently read a few of your *Berean Searchlight* pamphlets and have taken an interest in them. I would like to request that I be sent your *Berean Searchlight* by mail. These pamphlets have truly been a help in studying God's Word."

From California:

"Thank you for your ministry of God's grace rightly divided."

From Illinois:

"May our heavenly Father continue to give you wisdom and courage as you labor for Him."

From Singapore:

"I would like to thank you for sending me a copy of your book on *Ephesians*, and I will certainly share this with other Grace believers in Singapore. I am currently spending time with four Methodist pastors, engaging them on issues like Water Baptism, Security of Salvation, The Lord's Prayer, etc. as well as introducing them to the revelation of the Mystery, which they have never heard of. I am also doing this with a Roman Catholic friend of mine, who is beginning to question many things he has heard over the pulpit in the Catholic Church he attends. Thank you all at *BBS* for your faithfulness in rightly dividing the Word."

From Maine:

"We appreciate receiving the *Berean Searchlight* each month. It helps keep us on the right path of the rightly divided Word."

From West Virginia:

"I thank my God and the Lord Jesus Christ for every remembrance of you and all your ministry means to so many, and to me. What a blessing to share a small part in it with you and all because of His marvelous grace."

From Ohio:

"A friend up the street gave me his March 2000 copy of the *Searchlight*. I would love to have you send me the *Searchlight* and I want to purchase the book by C. R. Stam called *Things That Differ*." (As Solomon says, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is indeed a true friend who shares the gospel of the grace of God. Ed.)

From Florida:

"I really enjoy the *Berean Searchlight* and look forward to each issue. God bless all of you."

From Arizona:

"Thanks for sending me the *Berean Searchlight* magazine. Good articles by Paul Sadler and that MD's articles are exactly correct."

From Wisconsin:

"The *Berean Bible Society* is so inspiring to us. We enjoy the *Searchlight*. Since my stroke 2 years ago, I have many moments of peace in the comfort of our dear Lord and Savior. Thank you for your work, Pastor Sadler. You are truly a man of God." (Surely I am unworthy of such kind words. I'm merely a poor hell-deserving sinner saved by grace, grateful to be used as an instrument in the hand of the Lord. Ed.)

From California:

"I've been a Christian for 3 years. Your booklets have so opened my eyes to dispensationalism. May God richly bless you all for your labor is not in vain. I'm reading *Things That Differ* and *Who Wrote Hebrews*. For three years I have had a zeal for God and have been preaching grace but by no means knew the fullness of the revelation of the Mystery."

From Pennsylvania:

"Thank you for sending me the *Searchlight* each month. I've read several of Pastor Stam's and Pastor Sadler's books. I truly appreciate your ministry. Enclosed is a small gift. I hope to continue supporting your ministry on a monthly basis. Thank you."

From Missouri:

"Just a small donation to help with the work of the *Berean Bible Society*. We get the *Searchlight* each month and read it from cover to cover. We keep you and your work in our prayers."

From Pennsylvania:

"A gift to help in your so needed ministry of the truth printed so others may benefit spiritually."

From South Carolina:

"I once purchased a book written by an author who was convinced Prince Charles of Britain was destined for the role of the *man of sin*. But after reading the book *Things That Differ* and also other of your literature, I can plainly see that the Body of Christ will have been raptured away before the Antichrist will be revealed! Through your ministry, I now realize that the Mystery was gradually ushered in and interrupted the Prophesied Program. My prayer is that more believers will see this blessed truth and get with God's program for the Body of Christ. I appreciate your ministry more than I can say."

From Wisconsin:

"Thank you for being so faithful in sending me the *Berean Searchlight*. May our Lord bless you abundantly in all the work you do in His name."

From Oregon:

"I was a Baptist for 25 years until I heard about the Mystery through a neighborhood church and was astounded how much sense the Scriptures makes to me now." (As one former Baptist to another, may God richly bless you, dear brother, as you come into a fuller appreciation of your newfound liberty in Christ. Ed.)

From Colorado:

"Just a quick note of thanks for sending those *Searchlights* to Tulsa for a Disciples of Christ Sunday School class. They are also being given some of *BBS* booklets, *Undiluted Wrath* and *Just Asking*. Being liberal, they are semi-open to our opinion, enabling truth to filter in."

From Virginia:

"We want to thank you for seeing the need for a Bible conference in Virginia and planning it and seeing it through. We...look forward to another conference in the future."

"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

Thanksgiving

By C. R. Stam

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

—Col. 2:6,7

Whatever the failures of the government and nation of which we are a part, let us rejoice that it is our privilege to live in a land where the truth of God may be freely embraced and openly proclaimed; a land whose highest rulers set aside, each year, a special day of thanksgiving—not to some heathen deity, but to the true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While we lift our hearts to God in thanksgiving again and again (though never enough) all through the year, we, too, pause at this time to give special thanks to “the God of all grace.”

How is it He ever saved us? Why *us*? How is it He ever opened our blind eyes to “the mystery of the gospel?” How is it He ever committed to our feeble trust the wondrous message of His grace?

We do not know. We can only stand before Him in humble, reverent gratitude.

As we seek, through the printed page, to bring God’s people back to “the simplicity of Christ” and of His all-sufficient work—as we seek to send the message out, unadulterated, to the confused multitudes about us, we thank God, too, for the many who have shared the burden with us.

Sincere thanks, in His name, to all those who have had, and continue to have, a part in this work: our proofreaders, those who help with the mailing and office work, those who sacrifice of their means to send the good news forth and all who remember us before the throne of grace. All these are helping to make possible a ministry which otherwise could not be.

May God continue to bless our faltering efforts. We have been sowing for, what often seems to us, a long time, but at last we are beginning to reap. God is opening the eyes and hearts of many to the truth.

May we not fail Him now, but yield ourselves and all we have to the one great cause for which He has left us here—the *proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God*.



The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter

I Peter 2:13-25

By Paul M. Sadler



“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

—I Pet. 2:13-17

As we study the Word rightly divided, God has arranged His plans and purposes in an orderly fashion. We are to understand that the major division in His Word is between Prophecy and the Mystery. Within these two programs God has unfolded six ages: age of liberty, age of the nations, age of the Jewish nation, present evil age, kingdom age, and the ages to come.

While the dispensational pie is divided differently by Bible teachers, we believe God revealed *eight* dispensations within these ages. We have the dispensations of innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, divine

government, and the fulness of times. Unlike the ages, which have a beginning and ending point, the dispensations cover time and often *overlap* one another.

When Noah and his family stepped into the New World after the great flood, God revealed a new form of authority to govern mankind called *human government*. This particular dispensation is binding until the future millennial reign of Christ. While God is immutable, that is, He never changes in regard to His character and attributes, historically He has changed His dealings with mankind from time to time.

In the days of Noah, God established human government as a deterrent against evil and to promote righteousness. Whether we live under a monarchy or a republic, every form of government is *imperfect*; however, this does not absolve the believer of his responsibility to obey the powers that be. This is what Peter had in mind when he said to his hearers, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance [institution] of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it is to the king, as supreme; or unto governors....”

These believers were living outside the land of Palestine under Roman rule, which oftentimes dealt harshly with its subjects. Nevertheless, Peter instructs those of the dispersion to *submit* themselves to the authority of Rome, whether it be to Caesar himself or the governors he appointed. Even a corrupt government is better than no government,

otherwise anarchy will prevail. Notice, Peter does not advocate overthrowing the government, but rather dwelling in harmony with Rome for the *Lord's sake*.

I have had the privilege, at least I think it was, of working on three major building projects since I've been in the Lord's work, one of which was the erection of a local church facility. You would not believe the number of codes we had to comply with, but I never sensed that the local and state officials we worked with were being unreasonable. It was simply the *law*, which required a certain amount of exits, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, etc. To add insult to injury, they even required a third exit out of the fellowship hall, which seemed to us to be totally unnecessary. But then again, some of these same inspectors had stood in the charred remains of burned out buildings where people lost their lives because there weren't enough fire exits.

So then, believers are to obey the laws of the land even if they seem unreasonable at times. By failing to do so, many Christian groups have brought the wrath of the state upon themselves, only to destroy their testimony for Christ. Our Lord gave us this timeless principle that still applies today: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21 cf. Rom. 13:5-7).

Although the state has every right to mandate regulations for the operation and safety of our buildings and grounds, it has absolutely no right to impose itself regarding the spiritual affairs of the Church—that is, to legislate what will and will not be preached from the pulpit. Here we must draw

“...every believer bears an obligation before God to obey the governmental powers that have authority over us.”

the line, for it is better to obey God than men (Acts 4:16-20). But until such a time, *every* believer bears an obligation before God to obey the governmental powers that have authority over us.

INTEGRITY IN THE COURT OF THE KING

We have a vivid example of Peter's words to those of the dispersion found in the life of Daniel. In fact, you may want to read I Peter 2:13-17 again. Even though Daniel remained in captivity under the Medes and the Persians, he *willingly* submitted himself to the authority of the king. It is said that Daniel had an "excellent spirit." In other words, he had a good attitude, which won him the favor of King Darius. The king was so impressed by Daniel's dedication that he set him over all his affairs, for Daniel was a man of integrity, which is an outstanding *virtue* in any age.

But the officials who served with Daniel were envious of him, so they set into motion a scheme to entrap the prophet. For weeks they *secretly* followed him hoping to catch him in some type of indiscretion, whether in his business dealings for the king or in his personal life. What they discovered was that Daniel's life was above reproach. "*They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither*

was there any error or fault found in him” (Dan. 6:4).

This is what Peter desired for his hearers, “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” Daniel’s desire to do *well* put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—it left them utterly speechless! While these kingdom saints had liberty in Christ, they were not to use it as a cloak to do that which was evil, by seeking revenge against those who wronged them. Rather, they were to use their liberty to serve the Lord and allow Him to deal with the unjust. Here, again, Daniel serves as an example.

Once the presidents discovered Daniel truly was a righteous man, they decided to frame him. They knew he was a devout man who always prayed to the God of Israel three times a day. So, in Daniel’s absence, the presidents requested that the king make a decree—if any man asks a petition of any god or man for thirty days “save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions” (Dan. 6:7). These workers of iniquity craftily appealed to the king’s vanity since he believed himself to be a god. Unaware that he was being set up, as it were, Darius signed the decree.

When Daniel received word of the king’s decree, it didn’t alter his prayer routine. Like clockwork, he retired to his room, faced Jerusalem, and lifted his heart to the true and living God. Of course, the presidents who were within earshot informed the king that Daniel petitioned his God in defiance of his decree. Interestingly, the king was upset with himself for having

established the ruling because he loved Daniel and held him in high esteem. From the moment he learned of this unseemly plot he sought to free Daniel, but was unable to do so because of the law of the Medes and the Persians. Once the decree was made and signed, it could not be changed, it had to be executed to the letter.

After Daniel was lowered into the lions’ den, the king spent a sleepless night hoping against hope that the God of Daniel would deliver him from the mouth of those hungry lions, who probably hadn’t had a decent meal in days. The next morning Darius was at the lions’ den at the crack of dawn and found Daniel alive and well, to his relief. He was so furious with the *unrighteous* deeds of those presidents that he had them and their families cast alive into the pit where the lions tore them into shreds.

Peter wanted his hearers to understand that the various positions of authority established by the supreme ruler of Rome were implemented “by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (I Pet. 2:14). The fate of the presidents in Daniel’s day is a witness that human government doesn’t bear the “sword in vain,” a clear reference to capital punishment (Rom. 13:4). Here, again, we witness the sovereignty of God and human responsibility complimenting each other. Peter says “fear God” and “honor the king,” for it is God who ordained the powers that be! Daniel did *both* and won the favor of both.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the

froward [i.e. crooked]. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted [struck with the hand] for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (I Pet. 2:18-20).

It is interesting here that Peter is not addressing slaves (Gr. *doulos*, those in bondage), but instead (Gr. *oiketes*, household servants) those who were fellow residents. These Hebrew believers were serving in domestic capacities, such as cooks, seamstresses, teachers, chariot drivers, etc. This meant they had two enemies. Those who served Hebrew masters were rejected because they believed Christ was the Messiah of Israel, while those who were employed by Gentile masters were rejected because they were Jews.

Although they suffered for who they were and what they believed, these followers of the Messiah were to go about their responsibilities without complaining. Even if their master was unreasonable, they were to *submit* themselves to him and respect his position, knowing not if they would have an opportunity to bring him into a knowledge of the truth.

Apparently, some of these dear saints had even been *falsely* accused of insubordination or perhaps stealing, to which Peter says, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.” The term “thankworthy” here is actually *charis* or “grace” in the original language. Basically the apostle is saying it is an evidence of *grace* working in your life if you don’t seek revenge when you are wronged. This

is in accordance with the charter of the kingdom, where the disciples were instructed of our Lord not to resist evil, “but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:39).

“...there are applications that can be made from the life of Christ, but as members of Christ’s Body we are instructed to follow the *example* of Paul...”

Peter adds, “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted [struck with the hand] for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” In short, if a man is guilty of a wrongdoing and suffers the consequences, it is of little significance that he endured it patiently. Even the world endures such sufferings patiently. But if you are harshly treated or wrongfully accused and endure it patiently, not only is it a testimony to others, it is well pleasing to God. As we well know, the world’s response would be, “*don’t get mad, get even!*”

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (I Pet. 2:21-23).

Christ suffered for us, that is, “us” the holy nation, leaving “us” Hebrews an *example*, that “ye” kingdom saints should follow in His

steps. Surely the Gentiles cannot follow in His footsteps as members of the Body of Christ. Tradition says we should, but if you attempt to do so you will soon find yourself out of the will of God.

What saith the Scriptures regarding the *earthly* ministry of Christ to Israel? Christ was circumcised the eighth day according to the law. He was water baptized to fulfill the righteousness of the law. He demanded strict obedience to the law—all 613 commandments. He kept the feast days in accordance with the law. He *commanded* His hearers *not* to go to the Gentiles, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. He promised those who believed He was the Messiah that certain signs would follow them: “In my name they shall cast out devils,” speak with new tongues, take up deadly serpents, etc. (Luke 2:21-24; Matt. 3:13-17; 23:1-4; John 2:13-17; Matt. 10:5,6; Mk. 16:15-20).

Of course, there are applications that can be made from the life of Christ, but as members of Christ’s Body we are instructed to follow the *example* of Paul, who is the divinely appointed apostle of the Gentiles. Therefore, we are to *follow* him even as he followed Christ. Today, we are under the *heavenly* ministry of Christ, which is recorded for us in Paul’s epistles (Phil. 3:17; I Cor. 11:1; Eph. 1:3; 2:6; 3:1-10).

Returning to our text, Peter is reminding his readers what the Lord had taught him about discipleship. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Sadly, many interpret this passage devotionally. They claim “your particular cross” might be a financial reversal or the loss of a loved one, but this is far from

the intended meaning. We must remember the Lord made this statement in the context of His impending suffering and death at the hands of evil men. He *literally* meant that those who chose to follow Him would not only suffer, they may also be put to death for His name’s sake.

Thus, those of the dispersion were to follow the *example* of their Savior. When He was persecuted, He endured it patiently. When He was struck, He never sought to strike back in anger. When He suffered abuse, He didn’t threaten to retaliate. Notice what Peter holds out to them as an incentive to live a godly life: “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”



Sin is the root, and sins the fruit. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. At Calvary, Christ destroyed both the sin nature and the fruits that the old nature produces. Undoubtedly, some of these kingdom saints were bitter and resentful that they had been ill-treated, but these were the very sins Christ died for. Being dead to sin, Peter tells them, they no longer have to allow these sins of the flesh to control them. Their

lives were now to be governed by righteousness so that God might be glorified in them.

Notice, Peter borrows a number of phrases from Isaiah, “by whose stripes ye were healed” and “ye were as sheep going astray,” to show his readers that they were the sinners for whom the Messiah died. Christ’s finished work at the

Cross was in direct fulfillment of the prophets words regarding the chosen nation. Now that they had returned to the *fold*, they were to follow the good Shepherd, the Bishop of their souls. Today, Christ is not the Shepherd of the flock according to Paul’s gospel—He is the Head of the Body.

To Be Continued!



Question Box

“I struggle with worry—any suggestions how I might defeat this unwelcome stalker?”

This is a problem that every child of God struggles with at one time or another. It has been said that nine out of ten things we worry about never come to pass, and the one-tenth that does we couldn’t have done anything about it anyway. Worry is a sin. It always dwells on the future, which is divine ground. The biblical sense of this term means to pull in different directions or to tear apart. And it will do just that if allowed to run rampant in your life.

Those who are given to worry normally develop three or four worse case scenarios when they are facing a serious problem. This “unwelcome stalker” can be ushered out the door by merely applying a simple biblical *principle*. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:33).

In short, don’t concern yourself with what might or might not happen tomorrow. Leave tomorrow with God who is sovereign and in control of all things, “and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The answer to worry is simply to live in the *present*. Each new day brings more than enough troubles to handle without trespassing on areas posted “**DO NOT ENTER.**” Any problem we might face in a given 24 hour period is within our reach to hopefully find an acceptable solution. In the case of a pending hearing, you cannot tell your side of the story until the bailiff says, “Court is now in session, the honorable Judge Thomas D. Justice presiding.”



—Pastor Sadler

That Which is Lacking on Your Part

By Cornelius R. Stam

“I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.”

—I Cor. 16:17

Sad, was it not, that the Corinthian church, undoubtedly the largest of all the churches founded by Paul, had been so ungenerous and so insensitive even to Paul’s personal needs that he had to labor at tent-making in order to minister to them. They did not even provide for the apostle’s meager needs. Thus, sadly, he writes:

“And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I keep myself” (II Cor. 11:9).

It was no different where the work of the Lord in general was concerned, for whereas the churches of Macedonia had, out of “great trial of affliction” and “deep poverty,” given “*to their power*” and had *wanted* to give “*beyond their power*,” the apostle had to exhort the Corinthian believers to “perform” their promises and to “prove the sincerity of [their] love” (II Cor. 8:8,11).

Those who suppose that men of God *should* remind believers to *live* godly lives, to *labor* for Christ and to *witness* for Him, but that for some reason they should *not* remind them of their responsibility to contribute of their means—these should read Paul’s letters to the believers at Corinth and see how much the apostle has to say about this matter.



It seems that others were always bearing the Corinthians’ financial responsibilities for them, so that he had to write from Philippi with a touch of reproof, that he was glad for the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, since: “*that which was lacking on your part they have supplied*” (I Cor. 16:17).

In many ways the Church of today is like the Corinthian church of Paul’s day. This is surely so where financial stewardship is concerned. Again, it is invariably the faithful few who supply “that which is lacking” on the part of the many. These few will be richly rewarded, but it is our desire, as it was Paul’s, that greater numbers of the many may join the few, both to lighten the burden of the few and to help reach the teeming millions of lost and bewildered souls who so sorely need a clear presentation of “the gospel of the grace of God.”

“What’s For Supper?” was authored by our dear Brother Dennis Kiszonas. Dennis is the Executive Director of *Grace For Today*, a nationwide radio ministry in the New York City area. Having had the opportunity to minister the gospel together around the country, we’re sure you’re going to be enriched by our brother’s sound teaching of the Word. —Ed.

What’s For Supper?

First Steps in Understanding How to Understand the Bible

By Dennis Kiszonas

As suppertime approaches at our house, I often wander into the kitchen while Barbara, my wife, is cooking our dinner, and I’m usually hungry. My question is often, “What’s for supper?”

In this study we’re going to ask the same question, but this time we’re going to ask the Bible—“What’s for supper?”—and we’re going to see that God has given several different instructions in the Bible at different times about the food that He allowed His people to eat.

Our goal is not just to learn about God’s instructions about food in the Bible, but to get an understanding of how to understand the Bible. What we’ll learn about food is applicable to many other questions we could ask of the Bible.

We’ve known Christians who “study” the Bible by standing the book up on its spine, then carefully letting go and letting it fall open to any page at random. Then, with their eyes closed, they run their finger down the page. When it seems like it’s the right moment, they open their eyes and read the verse their finger landed on. That becomes their verse for the day, or their verse for guidance, or their inspiration for the moment.

That’s one method of Bible “study” that’s sure to leave a Christian in a state of total confusion.

God wants us to have an *understanding* of His Word. The Apostle Paul often prayed for the believers that he was writing to, and one of his repeated prayers is that God would “enlighten the eyes of their understanding,” or that they would attain to “the full assurance of understanding.” If we don’t *understand* the Word of God, how can we *believe* it?

This study is about one of the most basic principles of Bible study. It is about starting to understand how to understand the Bible. We’ll start by looking at five men, five leading men in the Bible, and seeing what God said to them about food. The study is very simple, yet the implications are really profound in helping us to understand how to understand the Bible!

WHAT GOD SAID TO ADAM ABOUT FOOD

The first man we need to look at is the first man, Adam. When God created Adam, He told him what he was allowed to eat:

“And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food’” (Gen. 1:29).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were vegetarians. God

commanded that their food was to be the herbs and fruits, no meat. And this same instruction was repeated in the next chapter:

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17).

This instruction about food was very serious, since it was precisely in this area that Adam sinned and plunged the entire human race into sin. He ate from the tree that he was told not to eat from!

I remember well the first time these verses came to my attention. I was in a Bible study group, meeting in someone’s living room. I was a very new Christian, and I almost went into shock. God commanded that man should be a vegetarian, and I loved pizza—pepperoni, sausage, double cheese, mushrooms. Now I thought I’d have to give up my favorite food...and I never knew that Christians were supposed to be vegetarians!

But someone in the Bible study group, older in the faith and wiser in the study of God’s Word, said that I should wait until I had read everything the Bible says about food before I gave up my pizzas. So, before we give up pizza, let’s read on....

WHAT GOD SAID TO NOAH ABOUT FOOD

The next man we need to look at is Noah. There were about 1500 years between Adam and Noah. In Genesis 9 we read about Noah, after the great flood, receiving instructions from God concerning the food that he was allowed to eat:

“So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful

and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood’” (Gen. 9:1-4).

Here God changes the menu for mankind. *“Every living thing that moves shall be food for you...even as the green herbs.”* God had spoken of the “beasts of the earth...birds of the air...fish of the sea,” and then He says to Noah that all these are to be his food, along with the herbs, that is the vegetables and grains. For the first 1500 years of the human race, God’s instructions were that man was to be a vegetarian, now, after the great flood, God changes the instructions and adds meat, fowl, fish to the basic vegetable and grain menu.



I breathed a sigh of relief, after 1500 years, now pizza was OK. But there’s more....

WHAT GOD SAID TO MOSES ABOUT FOOD

The next man we need to look at is Moses, the Law-giver of Israel. In Leviticus 11, God gave Moses and Aaron a complete chapter of some 47 verses detailing which animals the Israelites could eat, and which were “unclean” and forbidden.

“And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth’” (Lev. 11:1-2).

Among the forbidden animals was the swine (Lev. 11:7) or pig, so pork was unclean. Forget about sausage or pepperoni pizza! The chapter lists the seafood that was allowed—fish with scales, and the seafood that was unclean—lobsters, shrimp, clams. The birds that were unclean—eagles, vultures, buzzards, even the insects that were allowed—the grasshopper, cricket and locust were kosher and allowed to be eaten!



The chapter ends with this instruction:

“This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, To distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten” (Lev. 11:46-47).

Before we move on further, let’s review...

To Adam God said that his food was to be herbs and fruits. This instruction was in effect for about 1500 years.

Then to Noah God commanded that he and his descendants could eat every moving living thing: animals, fish and birds, meat, fowl and fish, along with the herbs. This instruction lasted about 1000 years.

In the Law of Moses God again changed His instructions concerning food—at least for the nation of Israel—now only *certain* animals, fish and birds were allowed to be

eaten, the rest were unclean and not allowed for the Israelites to eat.

This instruction—the Law of Moses with its kosher and non-kosher food—was in effect all throughout the rest of the Old Testament, and all throughout the four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—and on into the early chapters of the Book of Acts. This brings us to the next man we need to study, Peter.

WHAT GOD SAID TO PETER ABOUT FOOD

In Acts 10 and 11 Peter received a startling revelation from the Lord concerning food. One day Peter was hungry at about noon time. So while lunch was being prepared, Peter was up on a rooftop praying when he received a vision from the Lord.

“...Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’

“But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’

“And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common’” (Acts 10:9-16).

Something like a great white sheet descended from heaven in this vision and in the sheet Peter saw all kinds of animals, creeping things—insects, lizards, etc., and birds. Some were kosher, but apparently many, perhaps most, were

not kosher. God's instruction to Peter was, *"Rise, kill and eat."* Peter was now allowed to eat any kind of meat, or fowl or insect, or other living thing. Peter, though, protests and says to God, *"Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything unclean or common."*

From this statement we learn that Peter has kept the kosher laws all his life. When the Lord was with the twelve apostles for those three years of His earthly ministry, the Lord and the twelve apostles never ate anything that wasn't kosher. And in Acts 10 more than a year after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord into heaven, Peter still was keeping the Law of Moses. He had never eaten anything in disobedience to Leviticus 11 which had been written by Moses about 1500 years before.

But now again, God was changing the command regarding food. Now God says to Peter, *"What God has cleansed, you must not call common."* Now these animals, birds and fish that were once "unclean" have now been cleansed. Again, let's review...

God commanded Adam that he could eat herbs and fruits only. This instruction stood for some 1500 years.

Then God commanded Noah that he could eat any kind of moving living thing along with the vegetables. This instruction stood for about 1000 years.

Then God told Moses that only *certain* animals, birds and seafood were allowed to be eaten by the Israelites. Moses' law stayed in

effect for some 1500 years until the middle of the Book of Acts.

Which now brings us to the last man we want to look at, the Apostle Paul.

WHAT THE LORD JESUS SAID TO PAUL ABOUT FOOD

What Peter didn't know in Acts 10, but we do, is that a new dispensation had begun in Acts 9. One chapter before Peter's vision, something even more startling happened one day on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. The Lord Jesus Christ saved a man who later called himself, the "chief of sinners," and appointed him to become the Apostle Paul. And the Lord Jesus began to reveal to Paul a dispensation called the "dispensation of the grace of God" (Eph. 3:2).

Just as Moses was the Law-giver for Israel, and his dispensation included instructions about food, so also Paul became the "dispenser" of the dispensation of

the grace of God, and his dispensation also included instructions about food:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

"One chapter before Peter's vision, something even more startling happened one day on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus."

Paul warns Timothy that in the latter times there will be teachers who will command the Christians to *“abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving.”* Paul says that this will be evidence of a departure from the faith, for in the dispensation of the grace of God, *“Every creature of God is good [meat, fowl, or seafood] and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving.”*

Today, for us living under grace (Rom. 6:14) and in this dispensation given to Paul by the Lord from heaven (Eph. 3:2), *all* animals, birds, and seafood are allowed to be eaten as food. Nothing is forbidden. For the past 2000 years, ever since the dispensation of grace began in Acts 9 with the salvation of this new apostle, godly people have been permitted to eat sausage and pepperoni pizzas with double cheese and mushrooms!

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT “HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?”

Back to our purpose in this study ...how do these things we have seen about God’s food laws in the Bible help us to understand how to understand the Bible?



First, we need to realize when we’re studying the Bible, that God has given different commands to different people at different times all through the Word of God. In regard

to food, God gave one initial instruction to Adam and his descendants, then changed the instruction when He spoke to Noah. Then again a new set of instructions for Moses, that were completely changed when he called the Apostle Paul and revealed the dispensation of grace to him for us today.

The instructions would even *seem* to contradict each other...to Adam: herbs and fruits only, then to Noah: any living thing—animal, bird or fish—then to Moses: only *some* living things, then for us: *“every creature of God is good [for food].”*

Unless we realize that God has different instructions for different people at different times, we would have to conclude that the Bible is full of contradictions.

Second: When we study the Bible, we need to be careful to “rightly divide the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15) to be sure that we are applying God’s instructions for us today, and not God’s instructions to someone living in another dispensation. Just dropping the Bible open and randomly putting our finger down on any verse is not “rightly dividing the Word of truth!” and is a good way to become very confused about how to understand the Bible.

Of course, the instructions about food are only part of the Word of God. But many other teachings in the Bible also have to be studied “dispensationally.” For instance, the Lord’s teaching about prayer for us in the dispensation of grace is vastly different from what He gave the twelve apostles during His earthly ministry in Israel.

To Israel the Lord said, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”* And, *“And whatever things you ask*

in prayer, believing, you will receive" (John 15:7 and Matt. 21:22).

Many today have tried to "claim" these prayer promises, only to be sadly disappointed when they didn't work—they didn't get "*what you desire*" or "*whatever things you ask.*" Some have even lost their faith in the Bible at this point. They tried the "prayer promises for Israel" and found that they didn't work, and so concluded that the Bible isn't true.

What they failed to realize is that God's instructions to different people living at different times have changed, about food and about prayer and about many other things. When we want to know what to eat, or how to pray, under grace, we turn to the letters of the Apostle Paul. And when we do, we learn that even the Apostle Paul did not get everything that he asked for—see II Corinthians 12:8-9 for one good example, and there are a number of others.

Third, we see that a Bible teacher may be "biblical" and "scriptural" but he will be wrong if he is not "dispensational."

Biblical, in the sense that he is quoting Bible verses and passages, and teaching some portion of the Word of God and applying it to believers today. And scriptural, in the sense that he is quoting Scripture to prove his point. But if he is not dispensational, he will be teaching wrong doctrine for believers today.

Example: A preacher could easily preach that we should be vegetarians today—he could find several verses to base this doctrine on in the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis where the Lord commanded Adam to be a vegetarian. The preacher would be biblical and scriptural, but he would be wrong, because he wouldn't be

"...God's instructions to different people living at different times have changed, about food and about prayer and about many other things."

rightly dividing the Word of truth. Yes, Genesis is God's Word, but not God's Word to us today!

We live in a time of great confusion even among Bible believers and Bible teachers. In some neighborhoods there's almost a church on every corner, and they're all preaching something different, yet they all have their verses in the Bible to prove that they are right and the others are wrong! And because they disagree about how to understand the Bible, and how to apply the Bible to us today, they are divided into thousands of different denominations and groups. We have seen in our simple study about foods in the Bible how it would be very easy to become confused—and then become divided from other Christians.

One church may be following Adam's instructions in Genesis 1 and 2. Another may focus on Noah's, or Moses', or Peter's, or Paul's—they would all have verses to prove that they were right, yet they would all disagree with each other, and none would be able to eat with the others!

We've been focusing on only this one area, foods, but the same principle applies to many doctrines in the Bible: salvation, eternal security, prayer, speaking in tongues, healings and healers, the Lord's coming again, and many other areas of teaching. All of these areas of doctrine must be studied, not only biblically and scripturally, but also

dispensationally—“rightly dividing the Word of truth”—if we really want to understand what God’s instructions are for us today.

Here is the simple answer to all the confusion that we find today in the Body of Christ, and the only way of having unity among all the members of the Body of Christ. We need to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ saved a new apostle, the Apostle Paul, for a special purpose, to reveal to him a new program called the “dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:2). Here is the key that opens up the Scriptures to our understanding.

PAUL’S LETTERS ONLY?


Does this mean that we only read Paul’s Letters in the Bible? Some, who first hear about studying the Bible dispensationally, draw the false conclusion that we should only be reading or studying Paul’s letters today. Paul himself wrote to Pastor Timothy:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness...” (II Tim. 3:16).

The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the inspired, God-breathed, Word of God. We are commanded to study the entire Bible because there are principles

in every part of the Bible that teach us doctrine, or reprove us when we are disobedient. The whole Bible is profitable for our study and learning. But the way to get the profit out of the Bible is to study the Bible the way God said to study it, “rightly divided” (II Tim. 2:15), recognizing that the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven the dispensation of grace to the Apostle Paul for us today. If we forget this basic principle, the more we study the Bible, the more confused we will become!

This has been a very simple study in the Bible, that began with a simple question, “What’s for supper?” Yet the principle that we’ve discovered is profound in helping us to start to understand how to understand the Bible.

As we have surveyed God’s different instructions to different people at different times throughout the Bible, the answer to the question—What’s for supper?—has seemed to be obvious, yet, sad to say, most Christians today have never seen this principle in the Bible. We hope that our study together has been profitable to you...that you have not only seen something new, or clearer in the Bible, but also will apply this simple Bible principle in your continuing study of God’s Word, and that you will want to share it with others. 

For those who would like more information about the radio ministry of *Grace For Today*, or to receive copies of this article in booklet form, you can contact Brother Kiszonas at: *Grace For Today*, PO Box 798, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108. The ministry can also be reached via the Internet: <www.gracefortoday.org>.



“Sometimes the Lord calms the storm;
sometimes He lets the storm rage
and calms His child.”

THE BBI BYLINE

Paul and Timothy

By Brandt A. Mulholland

Paul wrote to Timothy, *“And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (II Tim. 3:15).

Timothy’s father was a Greek and his mother, Eunice, a Jew. It seems that because his father had not circumcised him (Acts 16:3) he had not become a Jewish proselyte. His mother then must have been the one who trained him in the Scriptures.

Timothy’s grandmother, Lois, had a part in Timothy’s training as well for she taught Eunice. In Deuteronomy 6:4-7 we find the purpose for the Jewish training of children. The desire was to have instilled in the heart and soul and mind a love for the Lord their God. Galatians 3:24 was certainly true for Timothy, *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”* Paul refers to him as *“my own son in the faith”* (I Tim. 1:2) and *“my dearly beloved son”* (II Tim. 1:2). Just as he was the son of Eunice physically, having been brought to a full understanding of the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ by Paul, he became his son in a spiritual sense.

Timothy’s conversion probably occurred when Paul came to Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14). His mother and grandmother were probably saved at this time also (II Tim. 1:5). When Paul came to Derbe and Lystra the

second time, Timothy was a disciple and his mother Eunice a believer. Receiving a good report from the brethren at Lystra and Iconium concerning Timothy, Paul took him along with him.

Timothy traveled with Paul long enough to learn how to truly wield the truth and to put into practice what he had learned. So Paul pleaded with him to stay at Ephesus in order to command certain people not to teach any doctrine that is contrary to *“the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my [Paul’s] trust”* (I Tim. 1:11).

In I Timothy we are brought to the very heart of God—the salvation of lost souls through His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s own salvation is given as the pattern for all who thereafter would believe on Jesus to eternal life (I Tim. 1:16). Paul says that *“it is worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief [first in rank, the leader]”* (I Tim. 1:15).

Paul charged Timothy to *“war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience”* (I Tim. 1:18,19). The deposit committed to Timothy was to be kept by a well guarded garrison of good conscience, sincere faith, and love out of a pure heart. To do less would be to miss the mark concerning the faith (I Tim. 6:20,21). And we should also live our lives as an example to others, walking honestly toward the gospel of the grace of God.

Brandt and his wife, Christine, moved to Wisconsin from Kansas in 1999 to be able to attend BBI. They have a 3 year old son, Caleb.

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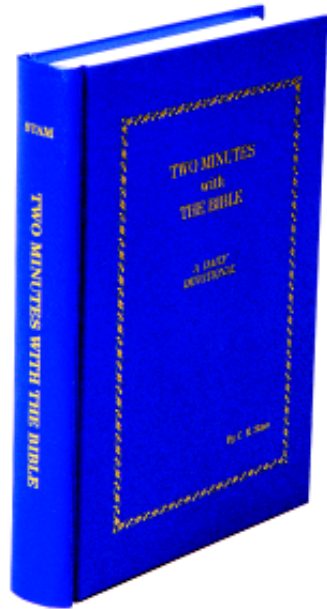
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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

GRACE LITERATURE: Several years ago our good friend Carl Kline wrote a book entitled, "The Acts Transition." Since so many find the transition period to be the whitewater rapids of Scripture, we always like to pass along works by other authors that will benefit our readers in their personal study of the subject. For those who are interested, copies of the "The Acts Transition" can be ordered directly from Brother Kline at: P.O. Box 376, Richland, PA 17807. The price of this work (paperback) is \$10.00 postpaid.

A NEW GRACE FELLOWSHIP is now meeting regularly in Grand Junction, Colorado. These dear saints would be honored to have you join them in fellowship as they proclaim the riches of His grace. For additional information, please contact: Mr. & Mrs. Dick Johnson (970) 245-8116 or Paula Padilla (970) 675-8629. Their E-mail addresses are: <thejohnson5@aol.com> or <pizpadil@amigo.net>. God's very best as you seek to reach others with the message of God's redeeming grace.

NEW LOCAL CHURCH: Earlier this year three area Bible studies formed into a local assembly in Ridgeley, West Virginia. Your Editor had an opportunity to meet with these dear saints at a recent dinner they hosted, which included testimonies and a message from the Word. It was indeed a memorable time of fellowship with those of like-precious faith. The *Grace Bible Fellowship* is now meeting at 108 Pineview Drive, Ridgeley, WV. The assembly is currently holding services every Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and at 6:00 p.m.—all are warmly welcome! For additional information, please contact Pastor & Mrs. (Saundra) Brent Biller at (304) 726-4063. The Billers can also be reached via e-mail: <bbiller@mindspring.com>. May God richly bless these dear folks as they labor together to make all men see what is the fellowship of the Mystery.

INTERNET: The huge response to our website continues to amaze us. Interestingly, a survey of the last 3000 hits indicated that the majority of those who contacted us were seeking information on dispensationalism. If you haven't visited the site lately be sure to do so soon. You may be surprised! The website is a great way to place an order for tapes and literature, especially since we now accept Visa and MasterCard. We can be reached at <www.bereanbiblesociety.org>.



*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was taken by Mrs. Betty France.

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