

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2001



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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

There are many faces of evil in this world. On Tuesday, September 11th, one of those faces appeared in the shadowy form of 19 terrorists who commandeered 4 airliners, laden with fuel, bound for the West Coast. The objective of these hijackers was clear, kill as many *infidels* as possible. This was more than merely an assault on capitalism and freedom; it was an attack on Christianity.

The image of planes flying into buildings, taking thousands of innocent lives, was a wake up call for our nation. Our country has drifted far from the Christian faith and values it once embraced. If there is nothing else that comes out of this haunting nightmare, perhaps our nation will be awakened spiritually. On the day of the disaster, tens of thousands were praying for the families of those who lost loved ones in this unprecedented display of evil. For the first time since the Second World War, churches across America were filled to capacity. However, it will not be religion that brings deliverance, but the living Word of God. We have witnessed firsthand the end result of religious extremes. It is Christ who brings life and life more abundantly!

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Sadly, man has brought this evil upon himself. Thus, we are left with an important lesson from these recent turn of events, a lesson each of us would do well to remember—death could visit



us or our loved ones at any time. Those who worked at the *World Trade Center* and the *Pentagon* began their day like any other day, but in a moment of time they were all swept into eternity. If death were to lay its icy grip upon you today, can you say with all certainty that you would spend eternity with Christ? If you are unsure, simply believe that Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again the third day.

In wake of the aftermath, our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who lost loved ones and friends in the unspeakable tragedy that struck our nation on 9/11. As we grieve together, may God comfort us with the full assurance that His strength is made perfect in times of adversity. Let's also lift up our Armed Forces before the throne of grace as they carry out operation “Enduring Freedom.”

Affectionately, in Christ,

Paul M. Sadler
President

From Massachusetts:

"Thanks for faithfully proclaiming the good news of the gospel and its complete emphasis of *grace* and *grace alone* through faith in Christ Jesus. It's not always a popular message, even in Christian circles. Man's pride wants to somehow earn something, even something so unattainable as a right standing before God based (completely or partially) on their own merit. I thank God for His wisdom and for your ministry. May He continue to use you in many ways. You're in my heart and prayers."

From Arkansas:

"I've just read *Things That Differ*. Paul's ministry and OUR commission seems so clear now."

From Colorado:

"I have come to know about Prophecy and Mystery on my own. I believe the Holy Spirit has been leading me to read and study the Bible through different teachers and organizations. It is a shame that Paul's teaching is still going through the same hardships now as when he was starting his ministry. If one searches for the Truth, he will find it. Thanks for your help." (This is evidence that the Mystery is a revelation from God, not merely the teachings of man. Ed.)

From Wisconsin:

"I have received the *Searchlight* for some 12 years now and have been encouraged by your stand, unlike so much of Christendom, which mixes the message with tradition. I also appreciate the change in the appearance of the *Searchlight*."

From Zambia:

"Thank you so much for the *Berean Searchlight* publication. It has been a great blessing for me over the past couple of years that I've received it. The first few months I found it very difficult to understand. Now the grace of God has helped me understand the *Triumph of His Grace*."

From Michigan:

"It is with thankful hearts that we send this letter to tell you how much we appreciate your commitment and support of the *Grace Believers' Conference*. We thank you for the messages that you gave on Saturday and Sunday; they were both encouraging and challenging and hearts were touched, especially by the message on commitment. That is something that all believers need to be aware of today. May your ministries, both personal and with the *BBS*, be fruitful and we pray God's richest blessings upon you and your family. We thank you for faithfulness to the message of Grace as given to the Apostle Paul and give God all the glory for those like yourself, who labor tirelessly for Him."

From Iowa:

"We pray that God will bless you and guide you and supply all your needs. We thank God for His many blessings and for our salvation through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior."

From Wisconsin:

"I hope that the camp at Cedar Lake, Indiana was well attended. I'm sure that it was a blessed time of fellowship in the Word of God. I attended BBF many years ago and have fond memories of it. Thanks for sending the *Berean Searchlight* and for your ministry." (Once again, overflow crowds heard the sound preaching of Paul's gospel from over thirty different Grace pastors and teachers. In fact, there were services that my wife and I had trouble finding seats. Ed.)

From Ohio:

"Thanks again and again for the *Berean Searchlight* booklets. They are blessing many here in Cleveland, Ohio, but most of all *ME!*"

From Washington:

"Just wanted to let you know how much my wife and I appreciated your seminar in Seattle, Washington, and being able to meet you and your wife in person for the first time."

From Florida:

"I'm writing to thank you for all of your help while I was in prison in Florida. Please tell me what I can do to help you in getting the word out to others in prisons all over. Also, let me know what I must do so I can still get my *Berean Searchlight*."

From the Internet:

"Is it right in your Bible and right in the meaning of YOUR god to persecute others that are different from you? I am a WICCAN, a witch? Does your bible (your WORD OF GOD) tell you that I am EVIL?" (Apparently this young lady took offense to something on our website. Sadly, the god of this age has blinded her to the light of the glorious gospel. Let's pray together that she will be delivered from the bondage of darkness by trusting Christ as her personal Savior. As we know, God loves her and Christ died for her sins. Ed.)

From Illinois:

"Enclosed is my July contribution to help in sending out the *Berean Searchlight* which is a blessing to me and I know to many others."

From Michigan:

"I wrote your office a few weeks ago and you sent me a wonderful book of the *Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* titled *Things That Differ*. I think this is a great book and a wonderful gift. I'm just writing to say thank you and that the gift is a true blessing. Thank you."

From Florida:

"Greetings, I pray all is well with everyone up there. I wanted to write and thank you for sending me Pastor Stam's *Acts, Dispensationally Considered*. I have a couple of others that are going to study through it with me. I really appreciate your help. You've been a real blessing. You all take care of yourselves and I'll keep you in my prayers."

From Illinois:

"Thank you so much for your faithfulness in sending the *Berean Searchlight* to me for many years. I look forward to it each month."

From Kentucky:

"First of all, thank you for the wonderful work you are doing. We enjoy receiving the *Searchlight* every month. It is always a blessing to keep learning the Grace message. Enclosed is an order and also a little something extra to use, as it is needed. Keep up the good work."

From New York:

"Enclosed is my offering for August. May God bless and use the *Searchlight* to bring many to a saving faith in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ."

From Florida:

"The *Berean Searchlight* is still such a blessing to me, after many years! Your articles and others included help me to grow in Grace and knowledge. I can tell you are a compassionate man and loving to others who don't agree with our doctrine. But that is what helps others to see the truth. My young pastor is a Grace believer—he's such a good teacher, and sees Paul's ministry and message for the Church today." (We are simply seeking to follow Paul's counsel to speak the truth in love. Ed.)

From Alabama:

"Enclosed is a gift of \$.... Please use this as you see fit. Continue to do the wonderful job you do of sharing God's Word, rightly divided."

From Washington:

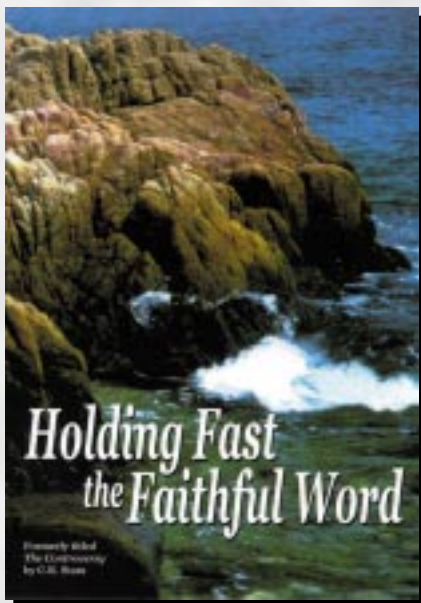
"Thank you so much for your visit to Seattle this past year. How wonderful to hear God's Word preached in all of its purity, the way He would have us study it, rightly divided. Please accept this small token as a precious privilege to further your ministry."

"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

Holding Fast the Faithful Word

Formerly "The Controversy" by C. R. Stam

Back in Print!



In addition to updating the appearance of this volume, Pastor Jeff Seekins, a BBS Board member, has written a new introduction to the work. He writes:

“The value of this volume goes beyond mere history because it addresses from Scripture many of the same arguments you will face today as you hold fast the faithful Word. The names and faces will be different, but the attacks will be the same. Therefore, the answers found in this volume are as timeless as they are Scriptural.”

CLOTHBOUND

SCRIPTURE INDEX

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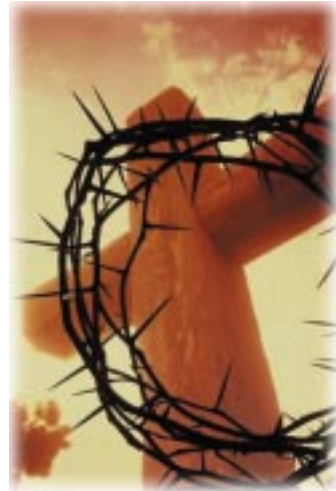
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Christ and Him Crucified

The Prediction of the Cross

By Paul M. Sadler

Call me old fashioned, but I still prefer to sing the old hymns of the faith. And for good reason: they are objective, that is, Christ is the primary object of the message. If you listen carefully, most contemporary Christian music is subjective. It emphasizes what the believer has done for the Savior. Since singing is an integral part of our worship, *all* the glory is to be given to the Lord. Although the old hymn writers generally captured the essence of the Scriptures, occasionally they were inconsistent. Perhaps the most beloved of the old hymns is the *Old Rugged Cross* by George Bennard. In poetic prose he beautifully portrays the sufferings and death of our Savior.



The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged Cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old Cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.
So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old Cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

Surely we shall never exchange the Cross for a crown, as the last sentence of the chorus suggests. Those nail prints in the Savior's hands and feet will be a constant reminder throughout eternity of His finished work (Zech. 13:6; John 20:25-29; Rev. 5:5-9). Christ is our Redeemer who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." He didn't die just any death; He died the death of the Cross. Death by crucifixion in biblical times was one of the world's most disgraceful and cruel methods of torture. The Jewish historian, Josephus, had witnessed countless crucifixions, which he called "the most wretched of deaths." Cicero referred to it as "the most cruel and hideous of tortures." Will Durant writes, "even the Romans pitied the victims."

As we prepare to enter into a study on the Cross of Christ, we are about to embark upon a great journey over a sea of Scriptures. Our journey begins in prophetic waters with the "Prediction of the Cross." David will be our captain who will steer us through the afflictions Christ would endure at Calvary.

A PSALM OF DAVID

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.” (Psa. 22:1,2).

As we gather our thoughts around Psalm 22, we have perhaps one of the most detailed accounts of the sufferings of Christ found in the Word of God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the heading “Aijeleth Shahar” appears above this Psalm, which translates into “The hind of the dawn of the morning,” which is interpreted to mean “the young deer suffers innocently, but the dawn brings relief.” Though veiled at the time, the correlation is to be made with Christ, who suffered and died as an innocent victim, but the dawn of the resurrection brought relief.

There may be another path of thought here as well. Recent archeological discoveries suggest that the Hebrews likened the horns of the deer to the morning light. In other words, they viewed the shafts of the antlers to be like shafts of light. Interestingly, the morning sacrifice in Israel was offered as soon as the Watcher on the pinnacle of the temple saw the morning dawn. He would then shout, “Behold the first rays of light shine forth.” Hence, the 22nd Psalm marks the *dawn of redemption*.

In addition, Psalms 22, 23, and 24 form a trilogy. In John 10, Christ is said to be the *Good Shepherd* who lays down His life for His sheep, as depicted in Psalm 22. According to Hebrews 13, Christ is called the *Great Shepherd* who was brought again from the dead to guide His people through the wilderness of sin and death. This is the theme of

Psalm 23. Finally, the *Chief Shepherd* of I Peter 5 finds its roots in Psalm 24 where Christ returns in power and great glory to establish His Kingdom upon the earth.

One of the remarkable things about the 22nd Psalm is that David vividly described the crucifixion of Christ approximately 1,000 years before the event took place. Another amazing fact is that death by crucifixion had not yet been introduced into humanity at the time of David’s writing. It is believed the Assyrians were the first to use this form of execution, for they were well known for their inhuman tortures. But what the Assyrians created, the Romans perfected. By the time of Christ, death by crucifixion was the chief form of execution in the Roman Empire for crimes against the state.

As we study Psalm 22, the Psalm is divided into two parts, the spiritual sufferings of Christ and His physical sufferings. The Psalm begins with “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” and ends with “he hath done this,” (vs. 31) or as the Hebrew conveys, “It is finished!” “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” was one of the seven last sayings Christ uttered from the Cross. The word “forsaken” is perhaps one of the most tragic words in the human language. It is difficult for us to understand how a mother could abandon her newborn, but sadly it’s a common occurrence. We are stunned when we hear about a husband who has forsaken his wife of many years. We ask why? We have trouble believing it, much less accepting it.

But when the Son of God states that He was forsaken by the Father, we stand amazed. If there is one thing that characterized the life of

Christ upon the earth, it was the unbroken communion which He enjoyed with the Father. The silence of heaven was broken on more than one occasion when the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:5). But now in His darkest hour the Father had forsaken His Son. Why? This was the very question that weighed heavily upon the Son's heart as He sought to understand, humanly speaking, why He had been abandoned.

"Our finite minds cannot begin to take in the majesty and holiness of God. He is infinitely *pure*."

As darkness descended from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. the day Christ died, the Son reasoned, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent...Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them" (Psa. 22:2,4). Here we have the innermost thoughts of Christ as He hung on the Cross. It is the only place in the Word of God where we are told what the Savior was actually *thinking* as darkness fell over Palestine. Only the Spirit of God could have given us this remarkable revelation through the prophet. The Son reasoned with the Father, "Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them." As the Son pondered the history of His people, He recalled how Samson was delivered from the hand of the Philistines; Daniel from the mouths of hungry lions; and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.

But there would be no deliverance for the Son, who was foreordained to suffer for the sins of His people, indeed for the sins of the world!

The Son answered His own question as to why He was forsaken of the Father in verse 3: "But Thou *art* holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The Father is *holy*, which speaks of His moral excellence. Sin is, without exception, a violation of His holiness. Our finite minds cannot begin to take in the majesty and holiness of God. He is infinitely *pure*. This helps us to understand the purpose for the veil in the tabernacle; it separated a holy God from His unholy people. Both King Uzziah and Isaiah had an encounter with God's holiness with totally different results.

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isa. 6:1-4).

During the years that Uzziah reigned, he led Judah in a program of peace and prosperity. But while the nation prospered materially, it was bankrupt spiritually. Note that in the year Uzziah died Isaiah "also" saw the Lord sitting upon His throne. This strongly suggests that Uzziah had been exposed to the holiness of God, but with catastrophic consequences. Although the king had done that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he had foolishly intruded into the priest's office by

entering the temple and burning incense on the altar. Uzziah was stricken instantly with leprosy and died shortly thereafter for his intrusion into the holy things of God (II Chron. 26:16-23).

One sin brought death and banished Adam and Eve from the garden. *One* sin barred Moses from entering the Promised Land. *One* sin ended the lives of Ananias and Sapphira. You see, a right view of the holiness of God leads to a right view of sin. When Isaiah came into the presence of God and heard the Seraphims cry to one another “holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,” and felt the posts of the door move at his voice, this was Isaiah’s reaction: “Then said I, Woe *is* me! For I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips.” Because Isaiah had the proper view of the holiness of God, he lived, and had his iniquity taken away, and his sin *purged* (Hebrew *kaôphar* or atoned—Isa. 6:5-7).

Since sin is a violation of God’s holiness, the Father could not look upon His Son who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Christ bore the burden of our sins *alone*. As despair visited like an unwelcome friend, the Savior reasoned, “But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” The term “worm” in this passage is the Hebrew word *tola*. The *tola* was a small maggot, specifically, the crimson grub. In ancient times they were placed in a bowl and crushed to produce a scarlet dye. As we know, Solomon robed the daughters of Israel in scarlet. May we suggest that the analogy we are to draw from the *tola* is this: the weight of Israel’s sins (and ours) crushed the life of Christ, who shed His precious blood

that we might wear the garments of salvation.

THE PHYSICAL SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

“Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me” (Psa. 22:12-17).

It is interesting how many references there are to animals in Psalm 22—the bull, lion, dog, unicorn, etc. Those who were responsible for the crucifixion were like the beasts of the field. They were cunning, vicious, and methodically stalked their prey. The strong bulls of Bashan undoubtedly refer to the religious leaders in Israel, who sought to gore the Lord with their horns of hate (Luke 23:8-21). Like the beast of the field that taunts its prey before killing it, these wicked leaders scoffed:

“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God” (Matt. 27:42,43). Thankfully, the Savior remained upon the Cross, for had He come down the world would have been swept into the lake of fire forever to satisfy the holiness and justice of God. Christ never wavered in His resolve to complete the work

of redemption. The above clearly shows that these religious leaders were not only ignorant of the prediction of the Cross, they also had no comprehension whatsoever of the significance of Calvary.

Death by crucifixion was the death of deaths. The victim's arms were outstretched and nails were driven through the palm of the hands. Then they tied off the wrists so the nails wouldn't tear through the victim's hands. Next, one foot was placed on top of the other and a large spike was driven through both feet. Hence, "they pierced my hands and my feet." This was only the beginning of sorrows, for death by crucifixion was a slow excruciating process that took two or three days. Three rusty nails secured our redemption—one fastened the *law* to the Cross, one fastened the *sins of the world* to the Cross, and one fastened *self* to the Cross (Col. 2:14; II Cor. 5:14-19; Gal. 2:20).

While not a bone in our Lord's body was broken, it does appear that when the Cross was placed into its slot the Savior's arms were dislocated from His shoulders, based upon the statement "all my bones are out of joint." Hanging by outstretched arms placed such tremendous pressure upon the lungs that it gradually became more and more difficult to breathe. To do so the victim had to push himself up by his feet to inhale. As the carbon dioxide levels increased in the body, the victim began to suffer from pulmonary edema, eventually dying from either a cardiac arrest or suffocation.

Interestingly, the Savior died within a matter of hours after being placed upon the Cross. In His own words He states, "my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" (vs. 14). Could it be that

"While the word of man is as unstable as water, the Word of God is always accurate and true...."

the Savior died of a broken heart over the sins of the world? As the moment of His death approached, the Son prayed to the Father:

"But be not Thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste Thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog [Gentiles]" (Psa. 22:19,20).

It was the Savior's desire to voluntarily give His life for the sins of the world and not have it ended by the sword of godless Gentiles. The Father graciously granted His Son's request, for we read in the gospel according to John, the Savior had already given up the ghost before the sword touched His side: "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:32-34).

PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR YOU AND ME

While the word of man is as unstable as water, the Word of God is always accurate and true, as we have seen from the prediction of the Cross and the actual fulfillment of the events nearly 1,000 years later. God's Word is *truth*. So when we read a passage such as the following we can count on what is said to be true. "Be not deceived: evil

communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (I Cor. 15:33,34).

The context of this passage is a warning not to adopt the ways of the world. Since the world had rejected the resurrection, their philosophy was to eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. Those of the household of faith are appalled at such reasoning. But God says, be not deceived, evil associations gradually destroy good morals. In other words, if you entangle yourself with the world, before long its influence will cause you to question and deny the Word

of God. Consequently, sin and the condoning of sinful behavior is displeasing to God. The Corinthians are a prime example of failing to heed this warning, but let us not be guilty of the same (I Cor. 5:1-13; 6:1-8,13-18; 11:20-22).

Psalm 22 teaches us that there is a conflict between good and evil in the world. Christ was the very embodiment of everything that is good and righteous. His enemies, on the other hand, were given to lies and hypocrisy. They hated Him without a cause. Therefore, we should not be surprised when the world hates us without a cause for standing for the truth of the gospel.

To Be Continued!



Question Box

"What is your position on the falling out between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark? Who do you feel was right? 'The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other' (Acts 15:39)."

I am persuaded that it wasn't so much an issue of right and wrong, as it was a matter of opposing viewpoints. Paul reasoned that Mark could not be trusted. He had forsaken them once; if this were to happen again it could jeopardize the Lord's work. The apostle simply felt Mark needed additional time to mature as a leader before he was given any more responsibility. On the other hand, Barnabas believed it was more important to give Mark a second chance. He reasoned that it could cause John Mark to become discouraged and eventually leave the ministry if they didn't take him along. Both Paul and Barnabas had valid arguments.

Since they were unable to resolve the matter, they parted company. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Gentile churches the apostle had established during his return to Tarsus after his conversion. Sometimes God multiplies by division! Apparently, the church at Antioch sided with Paul, for we are told that he and Silas were "recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." This is not said of Barnabas and Mark (Acts 15:40).

—Pastor Sadler

Taking a Stand

By Cornelius R. Stam

“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

“Go, stand and speak in the temple....” —Acts 5:19,20

As the apostles had followed Christ through His earthly ministry, He had generally *sat down* to teach. Concerning His first recorded sermon, delivered in Nazareth’s synagogue, we read:

“And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.

“And He began to say...” (Luke 4:20,21).

This is only one of numerous references in the gospel records. (See Matt. 13:1,2; Mark 4:1; Luke 5:3; *et al*). That this was His usual custom is clear from His own words in Matthew 26:55:

“I sat daily with you teaching in the temple....”

But even our Lord occasionally stood to address the people. In John 7:37, for example, we read:

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.”

But in this case the word “stood” means more than merely that He rose to His feet. Reading the context, one can take in something of the passion that filled the Savior’s heart as He beheld the multitudes going through the formalities of this “feast of the Jews,” only to be left spiritually hungry and thirsty.

On the last day of this feast of tabernacles, at the pouring of the ceremonial water, He could bear it

no longer. This pouring of water was to signify the refreshment of His own coming kingdom. But they did not know Him, nor the water of life, which He alone could give. Thus, He found a place to stand where He could be heard and lifted up His voice above the noise of the busy multitude: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.”*

This is what is meant by the phrase: *“Jesus stood and cried.”* The word *histemi* here means more than merely to rise or to be upon one’s feet. It means to *take a stand*, and it is often so used.

For example, in Matthew 24:15 we read of the Antichrist, who is to *“stand in the holy place;”* in Luke 19:8, *“Zacchaeus stood, and said;”* in Acts 2:14 we find *“Peter, standing up with the eleven;”* in Acts 25:10 Paul declares, *“I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.”* Furthermore, in Romans 5:2 we read of *“this grace wherein we stand;”* in Ephesians 6:11 we are told to *“stand against the wiles of the devil;”* in Revelation 10:8 we have *“the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth,”* lifting his hand to heaven to swear that there will be time no longer.

In these and many other occurrences of the word *histemi* there is a certain energy and determination manifested. It has clearly to do with *taking a stand*.

And so it is in Acts 5:20. The apostles had been commanded *not* to teach in Christ’s name. They had even been held in ward for so doing. But now an angel opens the prison

doors by night, bidding them take their stand for Christ in the temple, from which they had so recently been taken and cast into prison.

What a lesson there is for us in this scene!

Surely we have a more glorious message to bring to the world than Peter and the apostles had for Israel. It is a message that is all of grace—an offer of reconciliation wholly through the merits of the crucified, risen, ascended Lord. It is an offer of complete justification by grace, through faith—of a position in the heavenlies in Christ.

What have we to be ashamed of, with such a message to proclaim? Surely we should not hesitate to take our stand for it. But it is the very potency of this message that so enrages our adversary and causes him to oppose it so viciously. This is why the Apostle Paul so strongly urges us to be courageous in the fight:


“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to *stand* against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world [age], against spiritual wickedness [wicked spirits] in high [heavenly] places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to *withstand* in the evil day, and having done all, to *stand*.

“Stand therefore...” (Eph. 6:10-14).

May God help us, beloved, to boldly take our stand for Him and for the gospel of His grace. True, this is an evil age and we wrestle against satanic forces, but where sin abounds grace yet much more abounds. It was our blessed Savior and Lord whose death on Calvary made the exceeding riches of God’s grace available to us. Surely the least we can do is to take our stand for Him in this world of sin and make the glad message known to others. 

Scripture Memorization Plan *For Young and Old Alike*

Pastor Robert Hanna developed the *Scripture Memorizing Plan* pictured below. Bob has placed the verses to be memorized on one side of the card and a brief explanation of the passages on the other, with special emphasis on the Word, rightly divided. The benefit of this system is that you’re given the sense of the passages as you memorize them. Some of the subjects dealt with are: witnessing, unity, separation, conduct, responsibility, victory, service, etc.



Walking Worthy has 40 cards contained in a vinyl holder (check-book size) which fits nicely in shirt pockets, purses, etc. The *Scripture Memorizing Plan* is **\$3.00 each** and can be ordered directly from *Grace Gospel Publishers*, P.O. Box 21001, Denver, CO 80221. Orders up to \$20.00, please add \$3.00 for postage and handling.

Our good friend, Ken Lawson, is currently serving as the pastor of the *Grace Memorial Church* located in Edinburg, Illinois. He also serves as the president of *Midwest Grace Fellowship*, which is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. "The purpose of MGF is to win lost souls to Christ; to enhance and encourage Christian fellowship; to strengthen, establish, and encourage Christians [through Bible Conferences and the written page] who are committed to the truth of the distinctive message of the dispensation of Grace given to and through the Apostle Paul...." We're sure you're going to benefit from Brother Ken's insights on the subject of forgiveness. —Ed.

The Forgiveness of Sins

By Pastor Ken Lawson

"[Christ] in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

A businessman near St. Louis recently received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and was rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven. Lately, however, he has become conscious of sin creeping back into his Christian life. Haunting fears of an angry God keep torturing his tender conscience as he wonders if God still accepts him.

A suburban housewife has a husband who is an alcoholic. Early this morning, he came home drunk with a major dent in the family car. He is sorry but she knows, if she forgives him, he will just do it again.

An 83 year old woman near Kansas City sits alone in a large, empty house. Years ago, her family hurt her very deeply. At one time she wanted to forgive but they have never acknowledged that the offense ever took place. "How could they have done such a thing," she asks. Now she awaits death and deliverance from the bitterness and disillusionment that binds her.

The above examples are more than just hypothetical. There are countless similar cases being lived out every day in homes and churches

throughout our land. Does Christianity have the answer? It depends on what "Christian" you ask. One of the most misunderstood doctrines in the Word of God is the issue of the forgiveness of sins. I am convinced that two of the most difficult things to teach a Christian is (1) his sins have been completely and eternally forgiven and (2) this forgiveness should now be extended to others.

Why all the difference of opinion on a subject so foundational to the Christian life? As with so many themes in the Bible, the failure to "rightly divide the Word of truth" has led sincere believers in Christ to inconsistent positions on forgiveness. They say, "Thank God that He has forgiven me all my sins but...." Then they begin to list conditions which they believe they must meet if God is to accept them.

FORGIVENESS UNDER GRACE

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles and the revealer of the mysteries of God to the Church which is His Body, gives only one condition—belief in his gospel. According to the above Scripture from Ephesians 1:7, the forgiveness of sins is intimately linked with our redemption which in turn is based upon Christ's sacrificial

blood and the riches of His grace. Also, notice carefully that forgiveness (as with all our spiritual blessings) is past tense for the believer in Christ. We *have* redemption...the forgiveness of sins.

For those who need further confirmation of this wonderful news, please consider prayerfully these additional examples from Paul's epistles:

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).

“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:13).

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin’” (Rom. 4:5-8).

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38,39).

The above verses represent the teaching on forgiveness for the present dispensation of the grace

of God (Eph. 3:1-9). The instructed grace believer knows that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins and as such cannot merit a place in heaven with God (Eph. 2:1,8,9). The love of God has provided forgiveness for fallen man through the blood of His Son. Faith in Jesus Christ is the responsibility which a Sovereign God has placed upon man in response to His love. “Christ died for our sins... and rose again” is the gospel which Paul received from the glorified Lord Jesus and preached wherever he went (I Cor. 15:1-4). The Holy Spirit of God then takes the believing sinner and supernaturally baptizes him into Christ, thus establishing an eternal union (I Cor. 12:13). This has been testified to by the revelation that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ because the Holy Spirit has sealed us until the day of redemption (His coming) (Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30).

The knowledge of these scriptural facts give the believer great peace and joy unspeakable. But as is the case with so many Bible subjects, those who want to homogenize the Word of God go to forgiveness teachings given to Israel for a past dispensation and arbitrarily transplant them into the present dispensation of Grace. The result is fear, doubt, and a lack of boldness in our prayer life.

FORGIVENESS UNDER THE LAW

At this point, it may be beneficial to contrast forgiveness under the law of Moses.

“If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

What an oft quoted verse used by sincere preachers wishing to see our country restored to moral and spiritual greatness! Indeed there is wise counsel here for believers of all ages. Spirit-led humility, prayer, seeking God's face and turning from sin should produce a tremendous revival in the Church today. But take a closer look at the verse. "My people which are called by My name" refers to Israel under the law—not the Church under grace. The land to be healed is not America but Palestine. Now note the conditional nature of this forgiveness. "If My people shall...*then* will I forgive." This "if-then" syndrome so characteristic of the covenant of the law brings us all the way back to Exodus 19:5. "Now therefore, *if* ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."

"If Israel obeyed God's covenant (the law), God would bless them. If they disobeyed, God would curse them (Deut. 28). This is *not* how God deals with believers today."

This system of conditional blessing is stated repeatedly throughout the Old Testament books of Exodus-Malachi. If Israel obeyed God's covenant (the law), God would bless them. If they disobeyed, God would curse them (Deut. 28). This is *not* how God deals with believers today. We have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3,7). This includes the forgiveness of sins.

In relation to the II Chronicles 7:14 passage, we must recognize the

difference between interpretation and application. Since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, there are truths in this verse which can speak to us today, but only as we apply them in light of the revelation of the mystery given to us through the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:25-27). The verse *as it stands* with its conditional blessings belongs by interpretation to Israel under the law.

While some have come to acknowledge the difference between the Mosaic and Pauline systems of blessing (including forgiveness), fewer have seen that conditional forgiveness is carried into the non-Pauline writings of the New Testament.¹ Consider the following:

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:12,14,15).

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:34,35).

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25,26).

"Forgive and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37c).

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3,4).

Note carefully that forgiveness in the above examples is extended by the heavenly Father only when forgiveness is first extended to others. Likewise the other is forgiven only if he repents. The order is: (1) Offense committed (2) Confrontation and rebuke (3) Repentance of offender (4) Forgiveness extended by victim (5) God's forgiveness extended. This teaching shows forgiveness in relation to the millennial phase of the kingdom of God on earth according to Prophecy (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; Rev. 5:10).

In contrast, Paul's writings reveal that the believer in Christ today is working from a position of perpetual forgiveness from which he is free to forgive others.

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

"Forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

This teaching shows forgiveness in relation to the heavenly phase of the kingdom of God according to the Mystery (Rom. 16:25; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 4:18). As Scofield has so aptly stated, "Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ's sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven."

What a difference between law and grace—between conditional and unconditional forgiveness! Both systems are consistent with God's character and work according to His plan for the ages. But how we should rejoice in being saved members of the Body of Christ during this present dispensation of the grace of God! It shows that while God Himself never changes, His dealings with man do change through the course of history and prophecy.

"...Paul's writings reveal that the believer in Christ today is working from a position of perpetual forgiveness from which he is free to forgive others."

Some may still object that the forgiveness teachings of Jesus while on earth represent doctrine which was later written to us as members of the present day Church. They further argue that we also should make our forgiveness conditional. This they do because of traditional assumptions and a fear that grace will be abused.

First of all, we agree that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). All of Scripture is equally inspired of God but is profitable only as it is rightly divided (II Tim. 2:15; 3:16). Secondly, let us understand that Jesus' earthly ministry was only to the Jews according to prophecy (Matt. 10:5,6; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30; Rom. 15:8). Thirdly, our Lord's life and teaching did not nullify the covenant of the law given through Moses on Mt. Sinai (Matt. 5:17,18; 8:1-4; 23:1-3; Luke 2:21-24; Gal. 4:4). Jesus lived and worked as a Jew under the law as He was circumcised the eighth day, observed the Jewish feast days, told a healed leper to show himself to the priest and offer the gift (animal sacrifice) that Moses commanded, and charged His disciples to observe and do all which those who sat in Moses' seat bade them (i.e. the scribes and Pharisees who had this authority and were strict adherents for the letter of the law).

While Jesus' kingdom teaching did take the law deeper to include the motives of the heart (Matt.

5:22,28,32,34), and certain adjustments were made to accommodate the coming kingdom (Matt. 5:44; 13:52), His teaching was one of confirmation (Rom. 15:8). Any new revelations given by Jesus at this time were only added details confirming the prophesied, millennial phase of the kingdom of God as outlined in the Old Testament. Finally, let us acknowledge that the Apostle Paul is the theologian for the present dispensation of the grace of God. In his writings alone do we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the Church, the Body of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ conducted a heavenly ministry through Paul, his mouthpiece (I Cor. 14:37; II Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:11,12; 2:2,9; Eph. 3:1-9). We are the recipients of that ministry today through his epistles. May we never lose sight of where we stand in the program of God. This is crucial for our study of forgiveness as we have shown.

Being properly adjusted to grace teaching is absolutely essential for a joyous and victorious life of faith. How can we love and praise God for something we are not sure He has given us? Likewise, how can we have joy and peace when we fear God may withdraw His gifts? Let us not let unscriptural or undispen-sational teaching separate us from the enjoyment of sins forgiven and fellowship with the One "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith [faithfulness] of Him" (Eph. 3:12).

FORGIVENESS IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Here we must falter if our feet are not firmly planted in grace. We are instructed to deal with others in the same way God has dealt with us. Since God has forgiven us *all* trespasses (past, present, and future),

is it reasonable to withhold forgiveness from those who trespass against us? "But I was hurt so deeply," you say. Have you not wounded the heart of your Heavenly Father by your unforgiving spirit? You can never forgive more than He has forgiven you. God knew beforehand how you would sin against Him, yet He forgave all when you believed the gospel.

For anyone who may be struggling with an unforgiving spirit, I would make these suggestions.

(1) Make sure that you understand and believe the gospel of grace (Rom. 3:19-28). Without the indwelling Holy Spirit and the love He sheds abroad in our hearts, you will not be able to forgive in a way which is acceptable to God (Rom. 5:5).

(2) Recognize that this attitude is emanating from the flesh (the old self) and is sinful (I Thes. 5:15; Rom. 12:17-21).

(3) Do not indulge the flesh but judge it (Rom. 13:8-14).

(4) Consider the depths of sin from which you have been forgiven and what it must have meant to our Lord Jesus to die for us. A certain man always prayed, "Lord, never let me forget what I was before I became a Christian." As a fallen seed of Adam's race, your sin against a holy God is infinitely greater than any sin we may commit against each other.

(5) Take account of what your disobedience is doing to your inward soul life. Some people think they are well justified in harboring hard feelings against a person while others support them in their evil speaking. But much more damage is done to the offended party in the form of a darkened soul than could ever be done to the offender.

(6) Forgive the person as an act of the will. This is Christian love in action. Do not wait until you "feel" like forgiving. Forgiveness is first

extended, then feeling will eventually follow. Trying to work up warm, tender feelings toward the offender is not necessary to forgiveness and in most cases is artificial.


(7) Pray for the spiritual welfare of the offender. I once heard a preacher say, "It is extremely difficult to remain bitter against someone for whom you consistently pray." Good advice! God promises a "peace which passes all understanding" as we present all our requests to Him (Phil. 4:6,7). We have the added joy of knowing we are pleasing Him and bringing honor to His name.

(8) Be prepared for the reappearance of a root of bitterness. Many Christians report the return of destructive feelings, especially if the offender remains unrepentant or the offense is repeated. Time and again the old man wishes to raise his ugly head. Repeat the above steps.

(9) Use the situation to allow the Lord to conform you to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28,29). Shameless sinners are causing pain and suffering to the family of God. What a marvelous opportunity for us to take our Christianity out of the closet and let it shine before men!

So far I have said nothing about changing the offender. If the person is lost, we must pursue prudent means to share the gospel with them. If the person is saved, we must lovingly apply the means which are consistent with Paul's instructions concerning an erring brother (Gal. 6:1; II Tim. 2:24-26; I Cor. 5; II Cor. 2; Heb. 12:14-15). "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). That is a

truth which transcends dispensations and is true for all time.² If we are allowing our Lord Jesus to love him through us, we will be interested in changing the behavior.

Having said this, we must realize that some people will not change. But *we* can if we seek to live for Him who died for us and rose again. Forgiveness is not easy, but it is a wonderful occasion for the Spirit of God to change us into His likeness. Remember, God commands us to forgive and His commandments are also His enablements. Our Lord will never ask us to do something that we are unable to do. If God can raise our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and impart life to your dead soul, cannot He also give you victory in this area? "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thes. 5:24). Amen. 

Endnotes

1. The term New Testament is itself a misnomer since it could not be in force until the death of the testator (Christ). Hebrews 9:16,17.

2. While outside the space limitations of the present article, the issue of confession of sins for this dispensation has been much discussed, largely because of a misapplication of I John 1:9. Paul does not speak of confession in his epistles, although Luke gives us an inspired account of it in relation to his ministry (Acts 19:18). Many of Paul's commands cannot be obeyed without self-judgment which would of necessity include a confession of sin (II Cor. 7:1; II Tim. 2:21; I Cor. 5:2; 11:32).

When a Christian sins, we should agree with God's Word that it is wrong (confess) and forsake the behavior or attitude by putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:7-10). So we confess our sins, not in order to receive forgiveness, but because we wish to be properly tuned to grace and to thus glorify Him who has forgiven us all trespasses.

If you would like to receive a *free* copy of the *Midwest Grace Messenger*, which is published bi-monthly, simply write to *Midwest Grace Fellowship*, P.O. Box 14203, Kansas City, MO 64152. MGF is a faith ministry supported solely by the gifts of like-minded believers.

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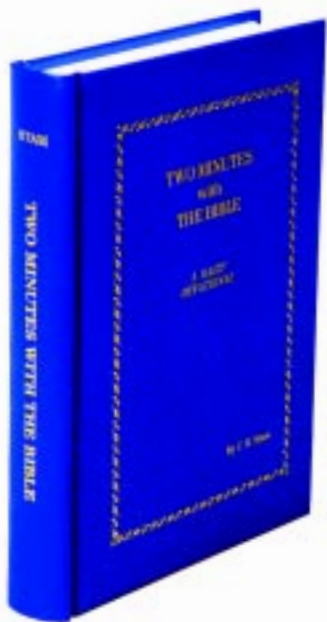


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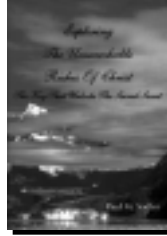


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By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.
Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

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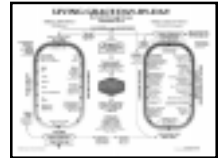
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I just spoke to Pastor Rollin Wilson who shared with me that DBS hopes to release a course on GENESIS AND ROMANS by the end of the year. Advance publication orders are now being received. This is a great way to increase your knowledge of the Word, rightly divided.

A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS: It is nearly impossible to respond to every letter and e-mail thanking us for faithfully making known the riches of God's grace. While we are merely instruments in the Lord's hand, we do want you to know that your thoughtfulness is a great encouragement to all of us here at the *Berean Bible Society*.

ONE MORE TIME: We think we finally have the problem resolved with Sam's e-mail address. Please note, if you would like to contact the BBS *Tape Lending Library* via electronic mail, Sam and Ruth Castrova have a new e-mail address: <s.castrova@att.net>.

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This publication should be ordered *directly* from Brother Pontis at 3020 Brixton Dr. East, Springfield, OH 45503. Please **do not** send your order to the *Berean Bible Society*. *The Real Christmas Story* is a paperback book containing 121 pages—**Price: \$6.00**, which includes postage and handling!



*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was taken by Gail Wilver of Naples, Florida. The *Grand Traverse Lighthouse* is located in Michigan on the northern tip of Leelanau Peninsula, which separates Lake Michigan from Grand Traverse Bay. The lighthouse, 9 miles north of Northport, Michigan, was first lit in 1858.

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