

The Berean Searchlight

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

March 2006



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

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

Composition and Layout: Kevin J. Sadler

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

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

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

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

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

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith.” In the mind of Paul, it was a worthy cause, one that glorified the Lord.

We, too, are to stand in the defense and confirmation of Paul’s gospel so others will have the same opportunity we had to receive this wonderful truth. Think back to the day when you first heard the Mystery—you were probably singing: *Free from tradition, O happy condition!* If you were like me, I wondered out loud, “where have I been all these years.” It’s so simple! Now the question is: what can we do to unshackle others from the bondage that once held us captive?

With God’s help, we plan to produce a collection of messages on DVD to help believers understand and enjoy the Bible. This series will give the viewer a better grasp of Paul’s apostleship and message within the scope of God’s divine revelation. We will also be emphasizing our *relationship* with Christ as taught by our apostle, for as we know, we are to follow Paul as he followed Christ. This is the only way to have genuine fulfillment in the Christian life.

Our good friends Casey Groeneveld and Orvel Baldrige have been very helpful supplying us with technical information. Casey, as many of you know, has produced his own DVD’s on the Word, rightly divided, so his experience in developing a format for us has been invaluable. Our dear Brother Orvel Baldrige has worked in this field for many years, so we plan to have him do all of our editing, which is no small task.

It is our desire to honor the Lord with these productions; therefore, the programs will be as professional looking as possible. The format that we plan to use will be conducive for home Bible studies, personal Bible study, and camps. In addition, these messages can be used in Adult Sunday School Classes. If your assembly is without a teacher, it will be a great fill-in! We are also going to be gearing the programming to *Public Access Television* for those who may want to expose their viewing area to the gospel of the grace of God.

Since these messages will take a great deal of time to produce, I have declined all public speaking engagements until Memorial Day. As we prepare to get underway, please keep us before the throne of Grace, that God will use these messages to the praise of His glory in Christ Jesus.

In His matchless grace,
Paul M. Sadler, President

Gladly the Cross I'd Bear

The above title is based on an old Christian joke that tells of a hymn by this name that was misunderstood by a child to refer to a cross-eyed bear named Gladly! It is not known if there ever was such a hymn, but the idea for the title surely comes from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:38,39).

It is commonly taught from these words that “everyone has his cross in life to bear,” that we all face different challenges in life, and if we bear them well we will go to heaven. That this cannot be our Lord’s intent can be seen from Mark 10:21, where the Lord told the rich young ruler:

“...take up THE cross, and follow Me.”

Here we see the Lord was not speaking of each man having his own personal burden in life to bear that was distinct from that of others, but rather that He had *one* cross in mind that each man had to shoulder, and in so doing make it his own. By examining the context of each time the Lord spoke about bearing a cross, we can learn about the particular cross He had in mind.

Often when the Lord spoke about bearing a cross (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), it was in the context of His own death on the Cross (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). Thus the “cross” that the kingdom saint was asked to bear was a willingness to give his life for the Lord, just as the Lord had given His life for them. This willingness to die for the Lord is also mentioned in the context of bearing the cross (Matt. 10:38,39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24).

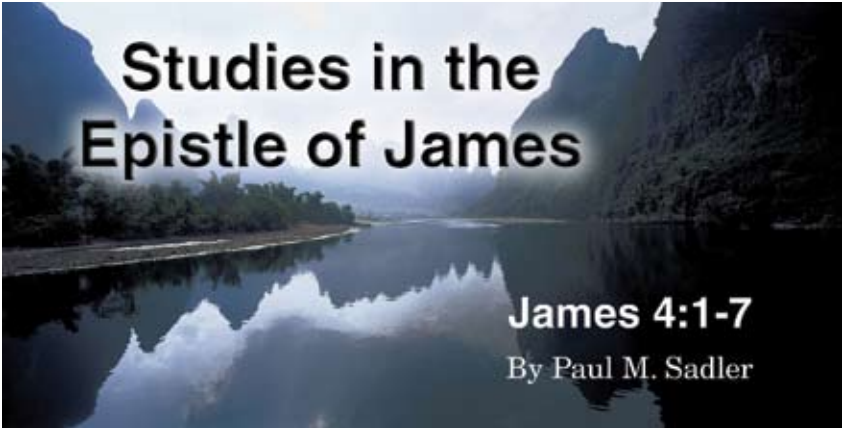
But while many kingdom saints gave their lives for the cause of Christ, as will many more in the coming Tribulation, certainly not *all* Hebrew believers were called upon to bear the cross of martyrdom. However, the context of many of these “bear his cross” verses indicates that there was yet another way that kingdom saints could give their life for the Lord. It is significant that several times after speaking of bearing the cross, the Lord said:

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul” (Matt. 16:26 cf. Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25).

Since the Kingdom gospel included the command to sell “*all*” of one’s belongings (Luke 12:33; 18:22), it appears that the “cross” the Lord asked all kingdom saints to bear was the selling of all their material possessions.

And so, in summary, the “cross” the Lord asked the Hebrews to bear was the giving of their lives for Him, some as living sacrifices and some as dying sacrifices, just as He had given His life for them.

—Pastor Ricky Kurth



Studies in the Epistle of James

James 4:1-7

By Paul M. Sadler

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”
—James 4:1-3

WALKING IN THE FLESH

At the close of Chapter 3, James effectively contrasted wisdom from above that is pure and produced peace, with the wisdom of this world that is sensual and devilish. The end product of worldly wisdom is *confusion*. This conclusion naturally flows into what follows in Chapter 4. Thus James continues his thought with a question, which he answers with a question: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” One thing mankind is very good at is *hurting* one another.

A boy once asked, “Dad, how do wars begin?” “Well, take the First World War,” said his father.

“That got started when Germany invaded Belgium.” Immediately his wife interrupted him: “Tell the boy the truth. It began because somebody was murdered.” The husband drew himself up with an air of superiority and snapped back, “Are *you* answering the question, or am I?” Turning her back on him in a huff, the wife walked out of the room and slammed the door as hard as she could. When the dishes stopped rattling in the cupboard, an uneasy silence followed, broken at length by the son when he said, “Daddy, you don’t have to tell me any more; I know now!”¹

This illustration beautifully captures the essence of the point James is seeking to make. Whether the conflict is between nations or a husband and wife the cause is always the same, *lust*. It is the *desire* to have power, control, preeminence, wealth or pleasure. Alexander the Great conquered one kingdom after another because he had an unquenchable *desire* to expand his empire. Near the end of his life he sat and wept because there were no more kingdoms to conquer. The *lust* for absolute power eventually destroyed him.

Notice James directs his question as to where wars and fightings come from to those “among you.” He purposely distances himself from his countrymen who were walking in the flesh. Surely, you say, he doesn’t mean there were “wars” and “fightings” within the kingdom churches. Sadly, this is exactly what he means. This is confirmed by the apostle’s next statement: “ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.” The sense of what James is saying in these passages is that there were *quarrels* and *conflicts* among them. And what was behind these skirmishes—*lust*. They lusted to have more! In some cases it was the insatiable desire to have unbridled *control* over the brethren that caused the contention. The Apostle John confronted this very thing in one of the Kingdom assemblies. He writes:

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (III John 9,10).

The actions of Diotrephes caused a serious *conflict* among the brethren. He was so self-absorbed that any challenge to his authority was met with disdain and expulsion from the assembly. Today, we would call him a dictator! Diotrephes failed to remember the counsel of the Scriptures that there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. In both the Kingdom Church and the Church, the Body of Christ, there is always *plurality* of leadership.

And “out of many comes one” who serves as the tip of the sword. This servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle. In other words, he is to be approachable, something Diotrephes had lost sight of, which created a battle royal within the assembly. This reminded me of a story, with a slight modification, that I came across several years ago:

The wedding guests have gathered in great anticipation; the ceremony to be performed today has long been awaited. The orchestra begins to play an anthem, and the choir rises in proper precision. The bridegroom and his attendants gather in front of the chancel. One little saint, her flowered hat bobbing, leans to her companion and whispers, “Isn’t he handsome?” The response is agreement, “My, yes! The handsomest!” The sound of the organ rises, a joyous announcement that the bride is coming. Everyone stands and strains to get a proper glimpse of the beauty. Then a horrible gasp explodes from the congregation.

This is a bride like no other. In she stumbles. Something terrible has happened! One leg is twisted; she limps pronouncedly. The wedding garment is tattered and muddy; great rents in her dress leave her scarcely modest. Black bruises can be seen welting her bare arms; the bride’s nose is bloody. An eye is swollen, yellow and purple in its discoloration. Patches of hair look as if they had actually been pulled from her scalp.

Fumbling over the keys, the organist begins again after his shocked pause. The attendants cast their eyes down. The congregation mourns silently. Surely the bridegroom deserved better than this! That handsome prince who

has kept himself faithful to his love should find consummation with the most beautiful of women—not this! His bride, Israel, has been *fighting* again.²

Certainly, this isn't true of the Body of Christ, or is it? Simply ask any godly pastor who faithfully ministers the Word and he will tell you, with tears in his eyes, that the members of the Body are fighting again. The local assembly can sometimes be a dangerous place for your spiritual well-being. Some of the brethren are so determined to make their point that they destroy their relationship with those around them. They fail to remember, "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city" (Prov. 18:19). When carnality governs the actions of a believer he can become more vicious than an unbeliever, simply because he is not walking in step with the will of God.

"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2,3).

Seeing that Peter admonished his hearers not to "suffer as a murderer," it is not beyond the realm of reason that a believer could take the life of another (I Pet. 4:15). But it is doubtful this was the intent of James' warning when he states: "Ye kill, and desire to have." He is not using the term "kill" in a literal sense, but figuratively. James aligns his teaching so closely with the Sermon on the Mount that in all likelihood he is simply reinforcing the instructions that were given by the Lord.

The law says, "Thou shalt not kill," but the Lord went straight

to the root of the matter that if a man was *angry* with his brother without a cause he was in danger of the judgment to come. The Apostle John adds: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15). Both anger and hatred are sins of the heart. It is sad but true that believers are susceptible to falling back into the very sins that so easily beset them. With this in mind, James points out to his countrymen that they were consumed with lust. That is, lust for position, status, and possessions, but when some discovered that these things were beyond their reach they became envious of those who possessed these things. So much so that *murderous* anger filled their hearts, which was jeopardizing the very testimony of these assemblies.



The hostilities among them, "ye fight and war," were hindering their prayer life in two senses. Some were so consumed with the heat of battle that they had stopped praying. James says, "ye have not, because ye ask not." Their preoccupation to win the argument left little time to communicate with God. Others who were praying did so with the wrong motive. Thus the apostle adds, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." The term "amiss" here has the idea of *depraved* or *evil*. The prayers of these particular brethren were laced with ill-intent. They went

something like this: “Father, destroy those from the face of the earth that oppose me!” Of course, what they meant was their *lustful desire* for power was being hindered by those who held positions of authority that they coveted.

The prayer life of these saints was governed by the gospel of the kingdom under which they served. Whatever these saints prayed for, God had promised to provide for them, as long as they asked in faith (Matt. 21:22). But, what “is not of faith is sin.” Thus the impure motives of these saints explain why God was not responding to their prayers. As the Psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18). The heaven was as brass to those who had prayed *amiss*.

WORLDLINESS

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Dr. Adrian Rogers, who recently was called home to be with the Lord, once made this insightful comment on adultery: “A man committing adultery says to his children: ‘Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a cheat and a liar. Honor is not as important as pleasure, and my satisfaction is more important than you.’” Solemn words for those who may be tempted to have an illicit affair.

Although adultery was a common problem in James’ day, as it has been in every age, we believe the apostle is making reference to *spiritual* adultery in the above context. Israel had had a long and sordid past in this regard (Jer. 3:8,9).

After the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, the ten northern tribes wandered into apostasy. Rather than seek the will of God, Israel sought direction from the astrological signs of heaven. As we know, Israel was primarily an agricultural community; therefore, Jehovah had promised her that He would increase the fruit of her harvest if she obeyed His voice. But the ten tribes thought they knew a better way—they brazenly turned away from God and worshipped the agricultural god of the Phoenicians known as Baal (II Kings 17:16-18). The two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin followed in their sister’s footsteps and committed the abomination of worshipping the sun (II Chron. 36:14 cf. Ezek. 8:5-18).

Many in Israel began well when they received Christ as their Messiah. But it wasn’t long before the adulterous affairs of worshipping idols were replaced with a new love—*worldliness*. James makes it clear, however, that whoever is a friend of this world’s system is an enemy of God because the world is *hostile* to the things of God. Friendship implies common interests, mutual respect, and similar goals. For the believer then to be a friend of the world he must for all intents and purposes *lower* his standard to be accepted. It has been correctly noted that “worldliness is what any particular culture does to make sin look normal and righteousness look strange.”

Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the Bells of Westminster were slightly out of



tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and they were discordant. The boys did not know there was anything wrong with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had *copied* their pitch. So we tend to *copy* the people with whom we associate; we borrow thoughts from the books we read and the programs to which we listen, almost without knowing it. God has given us His Word which is the absolute perfect pitch of life and living. If we learn to sing by it, we will easily detect the false in all of the music of the *world*.³

“Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” But he giveth more grace” (James 4:5,6a).

This particular verse has a boatload of interpretations. Consequently, we would like to encourage you to examine the passage carefully. Perhaps it will be helpful if we define our terms. The Greek *pneuma*, “spirit” can refer to the human spirit within man or the Holy Spirit of God. The term “lusteth” is the Greek word *epipothéo*, which has the idea to yearn or to crave, whether lawfully or wrongfully. Finally, “envy” is the Greek *phthonos* that simply means jealously. We believe the sense of this passage is: the Holy Spirit that indwelt these believers yearned, jealously, for their undivided attention.

God is a jealous God who desires the full devotion of His people (Ex. 20:5). While many of these kingdom saints were drawn to worldly influences, the Spirit’s desire was for them to yield to Him.

This seems to dovetail perfectly with that which follows: “But He giveth more grace.” To those who submit themselves to the Spirit of God, He gives *grace* to withstand the powerful influences of this world’s system. And when the draw of worldly things becomes greater in intensity, He gives “more grace” as needed. Once again this is “grace” within a dispensation, which should not be confused with the present administration of Grace in which we live.

“Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6b).

The Scriptures are a “who’s who” of those God resisted through the ages due to their arrogance. When Lucifer became filled with pride by reason of his wisdom and beauty, God *resisted* him by creating the lake of fire and expelling him from the third heaven. God *resisted* Cain by cursing the earth that it wouldn’t yield its fullness, thus he became a vagabond and a fugitive. He *resisted* Nimrod’s desire to erect a city and the tower of Babel by confounding the language of the builders. God *resisted* Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who withstood Moses by having them and their families sent straight to the pit of Hades when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them alive (Num. 16:1-35). When Christ was born God *resisted* Herod, who wanted to slay the Messiah, by having Mary and Joseph take His beloved Son into Egypt.

While God resists the proud, He gives *grace* to the humble. When old Pharaoh refused to let God's people go He supernaturally intervened with a series of plagues that left Pharaoh begging for mercy. *Grace* delivered Israel from her 400 years of bondage. As pride again filled the heart of Pharaoh he pursued Israel with an army that struck fear in the hearts of the Israelites. Again *grace* intervened when a pillar of cloud stood between the Egyptians and the children of Israel. It shrouded the Egyptians in darkness, but the cloud provided light for Israel. God resisted Pharaoh with darkness that he couldn't advance, while at the same time graciously parting the sea through which His people could pass safely. That's *grace!*

You will recall when King Saul proudly offered a sacrifice in disobedience to God that the Lord resisted him by taking the kingdom from Saul and giving it to David. When Saul learned that God's favor was bestowed upon David, he sought to kill him, but because David *humbled* himself before the Lord, God in *grace* placed a protective hedge around him.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

In addition to the desires of the flesh, James understood that Satan was also a factor in some of his hearers being enamored by the things of the world. But his instructions to resist the devil are prefaced by a very important truth which is often overlooked. Many well-meaning believers quote the latter part of verse 7 but neglect the first part of the passage. These kingdom believers were no match

for this archenemy of God. In fact, Satan would make mincemeat out of them, as the Lord revealed to Peter (Luke 22:31). As an angel of light his eloquence and knowledge would dazzle the brightest among us. As a roaring lion he strikes fear into the heart. As the tempter he can deceive the most perceptive. He is a formidable foe in any age.

“For the believer...
to be a friend of the
world he must for all
intents and purposes
lower his standard
to be accepted.”

But he is no match for the Lord; therefore, the believer who *submits* himself to God and resists the devil leaves him standing face to face with the One who is all-powerful. Even the mighty archangel, Michael, dared not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke thee.” Whenever the devil sought to tempt the Lord, He effectively disarmed him with the Word of God. Defeated by One far superior than he, the Scriptures state, “Then the devil leaveth Him.” James wanted his hearers to understand that they weren't alone in their battle against worldliness as long as they *submitted* themselves to God.

To Be Continued! 

Endnotes

1. *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Edited by Michael P. Green, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, page 19.
2. Author Unknown
3. Donald Grey Barnhouse

The following is the latest installment in our series of articles drawn from Pastor Stam's classic work on *True Spirituality*. Since this book never appeared as a series in the *Searchlight*, many of even our long-time readers may not be familiar with these selections.

True Spirituality and Our Liberty in Christ, Cont'd

OUR POSITION AS SONS OF GOD

By Cornelius R. Stam

THE SPIRITUAL USE OF LIBERTY

Christian liberty is a priceless possession. It can be abused, of course, but legitimately used it is an ever-flowing source of spiritual joy and power.

God's purpose with regard to the liberty of the believer in Christ is aptly summed up for us in one short verse in the Galatian letter. Falling naturally into three parts, the verse reads as follows:

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty;

"Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,

"But by love serve one another"
(Gal. 5:13).

We have already seen that, as the cause of spiritual decline in Israel was always their departure from God's Word *to them* through Moses, so the cause of spiritual decline among believers today is always their departure from God's Word *to us* through Paul.

Now, if anything is made unmistakably clear in the epistles of Paul, it is the fact that believers in this present dispensation of Grace have been delivered from

the law and "called unto liberty," and the failure of God's people to appropriate and enjoy this liberty today results in spiritual decline as surely as did the failure of the people of Israel to observe the law of Moses in their day.

Could anything be plainer than those passages in this same Galatian epistle, where the apostle says by the Spirit:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24,25).

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

"To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons...."

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7).

In the light of this it would be *unbelief* and *disobedience* to place ourselves back under the law, even though all the Word of God, including the writings of Moses, is *for* us and “profitable.” Indeed, when the Galatians, at the *dawn* of the dispensation of Grace (the dispensation of Law having scarcely passed away) “desired again to be in bondage,” so as to obey *more* of God’s Word, Paul rebuked them sternly, calling them “foolish” and “disobedient” (Gal. 3:1; 5:7) because in going back to the law they had repudiated the further revelation given by God through him and the liberty which Christ had purchased for them with His own blood.

Thus, to reject the liberty of sonship and go back to the servitude of the law is to repudiate not only the Word of God, but the Word of God *to us*, and this must necessarily result in spiritual decline.

It is not for *us* to decide how we can best please God. It is for us to hear, believe and obey *Him*. This alone is the course of true spirituality. Indeed, the apostle remarks on the relation of true spirituality to our liberty in Christ, saying:

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh....If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Gal. 5:16-18).

To depart from these instructions is to depart from the will of God for our lives and go backward spiritually.

Little wonder, then, that when the Judaizers sought to bring the believers at Antioch under the law, “*Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with*

them” (Acts 15:2). Little wonder he contended so vigorously with those “*who came in privily to spy out [their] liberty which [they had] in Christ Jesus*” and “*gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with [the Galatians]*” (Gal. 2:4,5). Little wonder that he wrote to the Galatians, who were being influenced by the Judaizers:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

“We have no right to cast aside our liberty, but we have liberty to cast aside our rights.”

Surely we, who live nearly two thousand years after the law, should not, at this late date, be tempted to return to it again. Christ has died:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [decrees] that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross....

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [substance] is of Christ” (Col. 2:14-17).

These and many other Scriptures on the subject of the believer’s liberty in Christ are too clear to leave room for controversy. To hesitate to accept and enjoy this

God-given liberty is a sign, not of spirituality, but of carnality; not of humility, but of pride.

LIBERTY NOT LICENSE

The fact that we are given perfect liberty in Christ does not, however, mean that we should spend our lives in gratifying our own fleshly desires. Just the opposite is the case. We've been delivered from the bondage of *childhood* and given the liberty of fullgrown *sons* (Gal. 3:24; 4:1-7) and this advance from infancy to maturity in itself implies the acquisition of a sense of *responsibility*.

The doctrine of our liberty in Christ does not support, but rather refutes, the false theory that those who are under grace may do anything they please. Paul was "slanderosly reported" in this connection (Rom. 3:8) but there were carnal believers then, as there are now, who actually did use their liberty as license to gratify their own desires. To turn from liberty to license in this way is fully as serious an error as to turn from liberty to law.

Many a believer, motivated only by his own fleshly desires and not at all by love for Christ or others, has indulged in pleasures of the flesh and of the world, justifying himself on the ground that he is under grace and has liberty in Christ. Taking others down with him in his spiritual declension, he complains of any who would help him that "They are trying to put me under the law."

Such are actually guilty of *departing from grace*, for "the *grace of God...hath appeared*":

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world [age];

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Peter emphasizes this truth when he exhorts believers to live,

"As [truly] free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness [as a pretext for evil] but as the servants of God" (I Pet. 2:16).

And John further emphasizes it, when he says:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him"¹ (I John 2:15).

Paul, the great apostle of grace, left no room for doubt as to *his* attitude toward worldliness and fleshly indulgence, for he said he was "*crucified unto the world*" (Gal. 6:14) and exhorted the Roman believers to "reckon" themselves "dead indeed" to the sins of the flesh, explaining that sin should not have dominion over them *because they were not under law but under grace* (Rom. 6:12-14). Moreover, he wrote by inspiration, so that his words to the Galatians and the Romans are also *God's Word to us*.

"For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh..." (Gal. 5:13).

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY THE VEHICLE OF LOVE

The apostle is not negative in his attitude in this matter, only cautioning us against the abuse of our liberty. He is positive, explaining how our liberty should be used for the glory of God and for the good of ourselves and others:

“By love serve one another.”

Here is an admonition so simple that none can misunderstand it, yet so sublime, so all-comprehensive, that it covers the whole range of the believer’s behavior toward his fellow-members in the Body of Christ.

If we but stop to consider the wonder of the fact that *we* should be entrusted with liberty—full and free—as fullgrown sons, while yet beset by temptation and sin, and often failing; if we contemplate the infinite love and condescension—and the infinite cost involved in bestowing this liberty upon us; if we reflect that this liberty, on the other hand, is given to us, not as unregenerate sinners, but that it is given to us *in Christ*, as those who have been crucified, buried and raised with Him, to “walk in newness of life”—if we take the time to consider all this it soon becomes evident that the *only* right use of liberty is “by love [to] serve one another.”

It is important to remember that we have been “called unto liberty,” but it is equally important to take care that we exercise this liberty in a life of usefulness for others. It is important that we “stand fast” in our God-given liberty, but it is equally important to heed the exhortation:

“...take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak” (I Cor. 8:9).

Referring to the eating of meat and observing of days, the apostle exhorts:

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way....But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably....Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (Rom. 14:13-22).

With regard to eating meat offered to idols, the apostle says further:

“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth [builds up]....we know that an idol is nothing in the world....Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge....Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth...” (I Cor. 8:1-13).

As the late Dr. Bultema has well put it: “We have no right to cast aside our liberty, but we have liberty to cast aside our rights.” This is the very essence of Galatians 5:13.

Outside of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, Paul himself was probably the greatest example of this use of Christian liberty.

Writing to the Corinthians he reminded them that he had the right as an apostle and as their benefactor under God, to live well and to expect them to care for his

needs so that he might “forbear working.” Advancing argument after argument from daily life and from the Scriptures to support him in this contention, he reminded them that they *owed* him their financial support (I Cor. 9:1-14). But he also wrote to these carnal Corinthians:


“...Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ....For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (I Cor. 9:12-19).

Referring again to his use of his liberty in Christ, he says:

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

“Let no man seek his own, but everyman another’s wealth” (I Cor. 10:23,24).

There we have it again. We have been set at liberty, not that we might indulge in the gratification of our own desires, but that we might live for others. Nor do we lose anything by this; this is true liberty, for “it *is* more blessed to give than to receive.”

Thank God, we’ve been “called unto liberty.” Through Christ we can breathe the air of freedom. But to fully enjoy this freedom we must take care not to use it as an occasion to serve self, but rather as the means by which, in love, we may serve one another. 

Endnote

1. It does not follow from this that worldly believers lose their salvation. The meaning is simply that it is impossible to love the world and love the Father at the same time. One love displaces the other. Fortunately, it is God’s love to us that keeps us safe (Rom. 8:35-39) but worldliness in the believer will surely result in loss at the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10).



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The Practical Beginning of the Body of Christ, Cont'd

By Dr. W. Edward Bedore

Paul's Own Testimony

When giving his testimony, Paul often connected his salvation experience to his call into the ministry and the message he preached. This shows that Paul received the call to his ministry as the Apostle to the Gentiles at the time of his conversion and began receiving special revelation of the doctrines of grace shortly thereafter.

Acts 21:37-22:22: Here Paul has been rescued from the Jews who were trying to kill him because he was falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the Temple. When the Roman commander allowed him to speak, he began by recounting how he persecuted the Church and was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ while on his way to Damascus. As instructed by the Lord, he went on to Damascus and met Ananias, who gave him a message from the Lord. In this account, Paul adds some details not found in Acts nine. In chapter nine, we find the Lord Jesus telling Ananias through a vision that Paul was “*a chosen vessel*” who was to bear His name “*before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*” and that he would suffer for His “*name's sake*” (Acts 9:15-16). But it does not tell us that Ananias told Paul this. However, in Acts twenty-two, Paul specifically tells us that Ananias did relay a message from the Lord to him. “*And he (Ananias) said, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee (Saul), that thou shouldest know His will and **see that Just One** and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness **unto all men** of what thou hast seen and heard*” (Acts 22:14-15).

In chapter nine, Paul's commission is stated as being to “*the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel*”, which is the opposite order of the Kingdom commission given to Peter and the eleven (see Acts 1:6-9). In his testimony, Paul simply says that he was sent to be “*a witness unto all men*” of what he had already seen and heard (Acts 22:15). That it is condensed to “*all men*” in this account infers that his commission made no distinction between the Jews and Gentiles. This could never be said of the Kingdom commission, which emphasizes Israel's covenant position as God's chosen people. The Kingdom message rests on the fact that God would send the Messiah to deliver Israel from her Gentile enemies and forgive her of her iniquity (Jer. 23:1-6; 31:31-34; etc.).

Paul then tells his hearers about what took place when he returned to Jerusalem three years after his conversion (cf. Gal. 1:17-18). He went into the temple to pray, went into a trance, and had a vision of the Lord who said to him, *“make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me”* (Acts 22:17-18). Paul protested, thinking that hearing about how God had changed him from a “persecutor” into a “proclaimer” of Christ would cause the Jews to consider what he had to say. The Lord’s response was to command Paul to leave Jerusalem as He was sending him to the Gentiles (Acts 22:19-21). When Paul mentioned the Gentiles, the Jews began calling for his death and the Roman soldiers took him into their barracks for safety (Acts 22:22-24).

Our point here is that Paul was defending his God-given ministry to the Gentiles by showing its relationship to what the Lord told him in Damascus through Ananias and three years later in the Temple at Jerusalem. Obviously, he intended that his audience understand his calling into the ministry by the Lord in the same context as the ministry that he was involved in at the time he was speaking to them. In other words, Paul was saying that his present work among the Gentiles was directly related to him having been sent as a witness to *“all men”* at the time of his conversion, and that the Lord re-asserted this to him the first time he returned to Jerusalem three years after his conversion.

Acts 26:1-32: In this passage we find Paul being held in Caesarea where the commander of the Roman garrison had sent him because of a plot against his life (Acts 23:12-35). He was in prison over two years (Acts 24:27).

Eventually Paul had an opportunity to give his testimony before King Agrippa II, a great-grandson of Herod the Great (Acts 25:1-26:32). First, he reviewed his past life as a Pharisee (Acts 26:2-5), then defended himself by stating that what he was being charged with was in line with God’s promise to Israel concerning the resurrection of the dead (Acts 26:6-8). He used this same defense before the council in Jerusalem and before Felix (Acts 23:6-10; 24:10-21). The charges brought against Paul by the Jews evidently concerned his claim that Jesus, who had been put to death, was alive (Acts 25:18,19). Paul was preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord for the forgiveness of sins for both Jews and Gentiles and showing that the Jesus he preached was the same Jesus who is the Messiah of Israel (cf. Acts 26:21-23).

He was not saying that he was preaching the exact same message as Peter and the eleven, but that the foundation of his message was foundational to the Kingdom message as well. All of God’s redemptive purposes are dependent on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact of His death, burial and resurrection. Apart from Christ and His “love work” of the cross there is no good news for man. Jesus Christ as Redeemer and the promise of a physical resurrection are essential

to the hope of believers of every dispensation. This is true whether or not they had precise revelation as we do in the present Dispensation of Grace or if it was still veiled as in the types and shadow of the Law as it was in the time of the Old Testament. Peter and Paul preached about the same Jesus Christ but as representatives of different dispensations. Thus, there were differences in the details of their respective messages.

Paul then told how, in misplaced zeal, he had been engaged in persecuting believers (Acts 26:9-12; cf. Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6) when the Lord Jesus Himself appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:12-15; cf. 9:1-5). Here he adds some information about his conversation with the Lord at that time that is not found in the other accounts of this history changing event.

In Acts nine and twenty-two, it is simply stated that the Lord told Paul to *“arise, and go into the city (Damascus), and it shall be told thee what thou must do”* (Acts 9:6; 22:10). But here, in his testimony before Agrippa, Paul gives us a fuller account of what Jesus said to him that day. *“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee **for this purpose**, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear (reveal) unto thee; delivering thee from the people (Israel), and from the Gentiles **unto whom now I send thee**, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me”* (Acts 26:16-18). We learn several important things from this account.

First, Jesus Christ appeared to Paul for the express purpose of making him a minister (v. 16a). As Paul’s ministry was that of the Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), it seems evident that this is where he received his calling to that office (Acts 9:15; cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1,15-16; II Tim. 1:10-11).

Second, the Lord appeared to Paul that he might be an eyewitness to the fact of His resurrection (v. 16b; cf. I Cor. 15:1-8). Paul not only saw the risen Christ but, like the twelve, he also received his commission as an Apostle directly from Him (Gal. 1:11-12; Tit. 1:3; cf. Lk. 6:12-16; cf. Matt. 10:1-2; Lk. 9:1-2).

Third, the Lord did not reveal everything He had for Paul all at one time but would progressively reveal the details of the message that He sent Paul to proclaim (v.16c).

Fourth, the Lord promised to deliver Paul from those who sought to harm him, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles (v.17a). Many instances of this being fulfilled are found in the Scriptures (II Tim. 3:11; cf. Acts 13:44-52; 14:1-20; etc.).

Fifth, the Lord commissioned Paul to go to the Gentiles at that time (v. 17b; cf. Acts 9:15; 22:12-15).

Sixth, Paul's mission was to offer salvation to the Gentiles through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 18).

Seventh, that Paul obeyed this vision and took his message to the Jews and the Gentiles (vs. 19-20).

Eighth, that it was "*for these causes*", that is for preaching the message he received that day on the road to Damascus to Jew and Gentile alike, that the Jews had tried to kill him (v.21; cf Acts 21:27-28).

We recognize the fact that there is some difficulty in reconciling the order of events given in verse 20 with the record of Paul's activities that are found earlier in Acts and in his epistles. However, that does not change what is clearly stated in verses 12-18. Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles right there on the road to Damascus. Note that the message he preached in Damascus he also preached to the Jews and the Gentiles.

I Corinthians 15:9-10: In chapter fifteen of I Corinthians, the Apostle Paul forcefully presents the importance of Christ's resurrection to the Gospel of the Grace of God. First, he reminds the Corinthians that they were saved and have their standing before God through the Gospel that he preached to them (I Cor. 15:1-2). His concern was that they had been influenced by those who denied that Christ was raised from the dead and that believers would be resurrected. He points out that the gospel that they had believed and been saved through was based on the facts of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (I Cor. 15:3-4). His point is that if they were saved through faith that Christ was raised from the dead, but it wasn't true, their faith in Christ was pointless, or "*in vain*" (I Cor. 15:2,12,18). The believer's assurance only comes from the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead (I Cor. 15:19-22ff.).

Second, Paul explains that the twelve Kingdom Apostles were eyewitnesses to the fact of Christ's resurrection, as were more than five hundred other believers, including James, the Lord's half-brother (I Cor. 15:5-7). And last, Paul claims that he himself also saw the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:8-10). Even though Paul was not qualified in any way to be an apostle, the Lord graciously appeared to him on the road to Damascus and commissioned him as the Apostle of Grace (I Cor. 15:10; cf. Gal. 2:9; Acts 9:15-17; 22:11-15; 26:14-18). The grace which was bestowed upon Paul is shown to be directly tied to his having personally seen the risen Christ. Note the statements from the Acts record; "***Jesus that appeared unto thee***" (Acts 9:17); "***that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard***" (Acts 22:14-15); "***for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness...***" (Acts 26:16ff.).

Galatians 1:6-2:10: In his letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul defended his grace apostleship and message against that of the Judaizers, who had come in preaching a corrupted gospel that mixed Law with Grace. He makes it clear that his message was not the same as the message committed to the Apostle Peter.

Establishing the fact that his apostleship was not conferred on him by any man or group of men, but by Jesus Christ Himself, whose authority comes through the Father (Gal. 1:1), Paul expressed his dismay that the saints in Galatia were so quickly turning away from the Gospel of Grace to a perverted message that was not good news at all (Gal. 1:6-7). He told them that anybody who came to them with a message that was different than the one he had preached to them should be considered as one who is under condemnation (Acts 1:8-9). His motivation was not to please men but to serve the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:10).

Paul then states that he received his message directly from the risen Christ as well (Gal. 1:11-12; cf. v. 1:1). That he specifically says that he received it “*by the revelation of Jesus Christ*” tells us that his message was not already known by men but directly revealed to him by the Lord Jesus. **It is on this important point that the rest of the epistle is based.**

Paul goes on to remind the Galatians of his former conduct as a zealous Jew (Gal. 1:13-14). He had tried to destroy the Church, but in God’s time He had called him by His grace for the purpose of revealing his Son in him that he might preach Christ among the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16a). After being called, Paul did not consult any man about the message he would preach and did not go immediately to Jerusalem, which was the seat of the apostles’ authority. Instead he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:16b-17). It was not until three years after his conversion that he went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter (Gal. 1:18). Some of the details of this visit are found in Acts 22:17-21. Paul met with Peter and James at this time (Gal. 1:19) and then went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, remaining unknown to the churches that were in Judea (Gal. 1:19-22).

“Peter and Paul preached about the same Jesus Christ but as representatives of different dispensations.”

Paul qualified everything he was writing with the statement “*Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not*” (Gal. 1:20-22). He nailed down the fact that he received his message from the Lord Himself and was not preaching the Kingdom Gospel that Peter and the other apostles preached. That the churches in Judea only heard that this former persecutor was now preaching the faith that he attempted to destroy (Acts 1:23-24) does not mean that he was preaching the Kingdom Gospel, but that he was preaching Christ. Of

course, they assumed that he was preaching Christ according to prophecy because that was the only message that they knew anything about at that time. Note that Paul does not give us any other information to go along with this series of events other than that the Gospel he preached was given to him by the Lord. What he is defending is this special revelation and the fact that he received it before he ever met with any of the Kingdom apostles.

Fourteen years after his conversion, Paul went a second time to Jerusalem where he met privately with Peter, James, and John, the chief leaders in the Church there. We should note here that this was not the conference of Acts fifteen which was held during Paul's third trip to Jerusalem and was a public meeting with all the apostles and elders rather than a private one (Acts 15:1-6ff.). Also, if the Acts fifteen meeting had taken place before Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians, he would have referred to the official ruling by the Jerusalem council by all the apostles and elders concerning circumcision (Acts 15:23-24). During this visit, Paul explained the Gospel message that he was already preaching to these men so they would not undermine it because of a lack of understanding (Gal. 2:1-2). That he refused to have Titus circumcised and strongly withstood the false teachers (Gal. 2:3-4) at this time tells us that the Grace Gospel was already being proclaimed and that the Body of Christ was already in existence. Paul's refusal to allow the demands of the Law to be imposed on Gentile believers was to make sure that "*the truth of the Gospel might continue*" (Gal. 2:5). He was defending his Christ-revealed message of Grace to keep it from being corrupted by mixing it with the Law. We do not know when Titus became a believer, but we know that it was before the time of this meeting, which was sometime before Paul's first apostolic missionary journey (Acts 12:25-13:3).

Paul made it clear that James, Peter and John "*added nothing*" to his knowledge, that is they did not teach him anything concerning the Good News about Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:6). Instead, the opposite was true. They learned from him about how God had commissioned him with the Gospel of the Gentiles (the uncircumcision) just as Peter was with the Gospel of the Jews (the circumcision) (Gal. 2:6-8). Recognizing that the Gospel of Grace was particularly given to Paul, Peter, James and John agreed to limit their ministry to preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Jews while Paul was to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel of Grace (Gal. 2:9-10).

The message that these men endorsed was the ministry and message the Lord had charged Paul with at the time of his conversion, and by then he had already been laboring under it for fourteen years. There is no doubt that in this passage of Scripture that Paul is defending his God-given message of Grace and Apostolic authority. It is important to note that he does not mention having received another commission

or message between Galatians 1:16 and 2:1. His authority to rebuke Peter to his face (Gal. 2:11-14) and proclaim justification apart from the Law is found in Galatians 1:11-16.

Philippians 3:1-11: Paul warned the saints at Philippi against the Judaizers who would mingle Law and Grace by imposing the rite of circumcision on them if given a chance. He tells them to beware of these evil workers and points out that those who have trusted Christ alone and are not trusting in the works of the flesh are the true circumcision (Phil. 3:1-3; cf. Col. 2:13-14). If anyone ever thought they were right with God because of the fleshly works of the Law, it was Paul. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a zealous Pharisee who persecuted the Church (Phil. 3:4-6). He declared that his self-righteousness based on his ability to keep the Law of Moses simply was insufficient and so he rejected it all as rubbish and turned to Christ alone that he might gain the righteousness of God through faith (Phil. 3:7-9; cf. II Cor. 5:21). The result being to personally know Christ and experience His resurrection power in his life as he was being conformed into Christ-likeness through his new identity with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Phil. 3:10-11; cf. Rom. 6:1-11).

As we have seen, Paul makes it clear that he was saved and commissioned when Jesus Christ appeared on the road to Damascus. Here he tells us that he turned from every thing that he had thought made him in some way acceptable to God in favor of faith alone in Christ alone that he might be found righteous in God's sight. This obviously took place when the Lord Jesus appeared to him while he was involved in persecuting the Kingdom believers as he mistakenly thought that his zeal in doing so commended him to God (Phil. 3:6a).

If Paul had been saved into the Kingdom Church and then later transferred into the Body of Christ, he would not have made the claim that he renounced all of the things that we find listed in this passage. Under the Kingdom program, there is a distinction between the Jews who are of "the commonwealth of Israel" and therefore "children of the Covenants of Promise", and the Gentiles, who are not (cf. Eph. 2:11-12). As we have noted earlier, in the Kingdom circumcision will be required, and the Law, with some revisions, will be kept by believing Israel. It is true that in the Kingdom program salvation is still essentially through faith in Christ, but the Jews will have a place of authority over the Gentiles because of their covenant relationship with God. So, along with circumcision, Sabbath keeping, water baptism and many other elements of the Law will be kept to demonstrate the reality of their faith in Christ. None of this is true of the Dispensation of Grace. Paul's Hebrew identity in itself would not make him acceptable to God, but he could not renounce it as worthless under the terms of the Kingdom program. Again we see that Paul's message of Grace is directly related to the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus.

I Timothy 1:8-17: In this letter to Timothy, Paul gave this young pastor instructions and encouragement to stand strong in the faith. He explained that the proper use of the Law today is to convict the ungodly of sin (I Tim. 1:8-10) in accord with the Gospel message that had been committed to his trust (I Tim. 1:11). He then voiced his thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ, who enabled him to do the ministry He had called him to (I Tim. 1:12). Before being placed into the Gospel ministry, Paul says he had been “*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*” man, but through the “*exceeding abundant*” grace of the Lord he had obtained mercy (I Tim. 1:13-14). As we have already seen, this change in Paul’s life took place at the time the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

“This is God’s will for believers today just as it was for Timothy when Paul penned this letter almost two thousand years ago.”

Paul emphasizes what he says next by preceding it with the statement, “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*” (I Tim 1:15a). This tells us that what follows is significant and we should pay close attention to it. First, we read that “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (I Tim. 1:15b). The incarnation of the Son of God was for the purpose of reconciling lost humanity to God. This is an inter-dispensational truth that we must always keep in mind as we study our Bibles and seek God’s will for our lives.

Second, we read that Paul considered himself to be “*chief*”, or the foremost, of sinners (I Tim. 1:15c.). Of course, he wasn’t the first sinner, because that distinction belongs to Adam (Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:21-22) and there were many generations of sinful men and women that came and went between the time of Adam and the time of Paul. So what did Paul mean when he said that he was the “*chief*” sinner? I believe that the next verse explains it. “*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting*” (I Tim. 1:16).

Paul is simply stating here that the reason God showed him mercy in saving him was for the express purpose of using him to demonstrate His patience by using Paul as the prototype, or pattern, of those who from that time on would believe on Christ and receive eternal life (cf. II Pet. 3:15). The patience demonstrated is that, instead of pouring out His wrath on a God-rejecting world in the Tribulation, the Lord interrupted the prophetic program by graciously showing mercy to His foremost persecutor and saving him in Gentile territory apart from the requirements of the Kingdom Gospel. Even though he wrote this letter

over thirty years after his conversion, Paul was compelled to give praise to his Savior when he wrote about what He had done on his, and our, behalf. *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen”* (I Tim. 1:17).


II Timothy 1:6-12: In his second letter to Timothy, Paul reminds him that God has not given believers *“the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (II Tim. 1:6-7) and that because of this he had no reason to be *“ashamed of the testimony”* of Jesus Christ or of Paul, the Lord’s *“prisoner”* (II Tim. 1:8). Instead of being silenced by those who reject the Grace Gospel and the distinctive nature of Paul’s apostolic ministry and message, Timothy was admonished to be willing to suffer for the Gospel, trusting in the power of God to see him through. This is God’s will for believers today just as it was for Timothy when Paul penned this letter almost two thousand years ago.

Paul then goes on to remind Timothy that when we become saved we are also called to holiness according to God’s own purpose of grace. Although this was God’s plan even before the time of Creation, it has only now been revealed through *“the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”* (II Tim. 1:9-10). We believe that the *“appearance”* of Christ referred to here is his appearance to Paul when he was saved on the road to Damascus and *“appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles”* (II Tim. 1:11; cf. Acts 9:15-17; 22:14-15; 26:16-18; I Cor. 15:8-10; I Tim. 2:5-7). Again we find Paul linking his Christ-given ministry and message directly to the Lord Jesus’ appearance to him on the road to Damascus.

Conclusion

Because there is a clear break in the prophetic Kingdom program in the events of Acts chapters nine and ten, and the Apostle Paul consistently refers to the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus in the same context as his apostolic ministry and message of grace, we believe that the Dispensation of Grace began with Paul’s conversion and that the Church, which is Christ’s Body, began at the same time. Paul, being both a Roman citizen and a Jew was representative of the nature of the Body of Christ in which Jew and Gentile are seen as one body or *“one new man”* in their identity with Christ (see Eph. 2:14-16; cf. Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:11).

If it is important that we know when the Dispensation of Grace began, and we believe that it is, then there should be strong Scriptural indicators that direct us to that point in time. We believe that we have shown from the Bible that these indicators do exist and they point us to the record of the Apostle Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus as the benchmark that identifies the beginning of the Dispensation of

Grace. The testimony of the inspired Word of God, both in the book of Acts and in Paul's letters, tells us that Jesus Christ's appearance to Paul at that crucial time in Israel's history is the turning point that marks both Israel's fall and the birth of the Church which is His Body. 

Questions or comments for Dr. Bedore should be addressed to him directly at: *Berean Bible Institute*, P.O. Box 587, Slinger, WI 53086, or by e-mail at: bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org. This article is an abbreviated version of a longer article that you can have upon request.

Question Box

“Can you explain to me about ‘the Bible Code?’”

“The Bible Code” claims to see secret messages from God by selecting letters at equal intervals from the Hebrew text of the Old Testaments. For instance, a message might be gleaned from the text by selecting every tenth letter to spell out words and sentences. Bible Code proponents claim they have used this method to identify Bible prophecies of recent world events such as the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the election of Benjamin Netanyahu. Bible Code extremists claim to even see predictions of the success of Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls! It would seem that those who see such messages in the Hebrew text would see them just as readily in tea leaves or Tarot cards.

Serious defenders of the Bible Code assert that these alleged codes are too speculative to be used as a crystal ball to foretell the future, but can only be used safely when used after the fact to show that God indeed knew what was coming. While this certainly sounds more reasonable, we believe that there is absolutely no truth in any of this.

Once again, *“rightly dividing the Word of truth”* is the answer to the question of the existence of hidden prophecies in the Bible text. We are living in the dispensation of the Mystery, an age in which not a single Bible prophecy has been fulfilled for nearly 2,000 years now. During the prophetic program, God frequently predicted world events and the rise of world leaders. However, the Bible contains no such predictions concerning the present dispensation, and it would be inconsistent with the Mystery character of this age for God to place them in encrypted form in the text of the Prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament.

—Pastor Kurth

From Wisconsin:

"I read your publication last month for the first time after finding it on an internet search for the word 'Berean.' An acquaintance used this word in a conversation and it was new to me. I appreciate the straightforward presentation of Scriptural truth without the intermixing of modern, earthly philosophy."

From Florida:

"Your ministry has only recently come to my attention. As a lifetime student of the Bible, I am very interested in receiving your monthly publication, the *Berean Searchlight*. Could you please put me on your mailing list ASAP."

From Missouri:

"Many thanks for writing the book, *Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. My mother gave me a copy a year or so ago, and it is truly an inspiring, uplifting book for the Christian. It has helped me understand more fully how wonderful God's grace is for us today." (When I wrote the commentary it was my prayer that others would be brought into a closer walk with the Lord.—PS).

From Michigan:

"Thanks for continuing on with the good work of BBS. So glad you don't compromise with the truth of God's Word. Christendom needs to hear the Word of God, rightly divided, as much as the world needs to hear the glorious message of redemption. Keep on keeping on!!"

From Colorado:

"My husband used Pastor Sadler's VHS series *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, which was given to him by... and thought it was wonderful! He even repeated some of it. I thought it was excellent, too."

From Florida:

"I am new into this Grace message. I'm slowly learning and gaining strength. I was raised Baptist."

From Michigan:

"After twenty plus years of studying and enjoying rightly dividing the Word under your teaching and trying to enlighten other Christians with very little success, we accidentally met with a Christian who was so hungry to have things explained to her. I don't know who felt more blessed—her or us! We spent a most joyous two hours or more with her in the Scriptures. She was well-versed in the Bible, had so many questions, and was so excited with what was being revealed to her. We left some of your books with her. She wants to order some for herself, and she wants her name on your mailing list for the *Searchlight*."

From Alabama:

"I was an ordained minister with the *Church of God*, but I saw the truth of God's Word listening to Les Feldick, then I found your website. I have been teaching the Word, rightly divided, for three years now. Any help would be appreciated." (Brother Feldick has been greatly used of the Lord to introduce many, many dear saints to the riches of God's grace. Simply let us know how we might assist you in the faith.—PS).

From Illinois:

"I just started learning about right division and grace two years ago. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the folks that preach Paul's epistles."

From Missouri:

"The *Berean Searchlight* is a 'must have' magazine that keeps us focused on what is important and what really matters in these closing days of time."

From Ohio:

“Thank you for your current magazine. I always find it very enlightening and informative—most of all inspiring! We have been greatly helped by the studies in the *Book of James*, and the profit of spiritual gifts was surely explained very well.”

From Arizona:

“All the literature I’ve bought has been read by all the brethren and is very instrumental for the building up of the congregation. We have studies regularly and it is a joy to see people receive ‘*Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery*.’”

From the Internet:

“This Sunday we will complete our study of *Colossians*. In leading this Bible study, I used the *Colossians* book that I got when Brother Paul Sadler came to the grace church in Ashtabula, Ohio, this past year. We had many wonderful lessons from that book, and much was learned and shared about God’s Word to us. I used your book for the basic structure of each lesson, and often used the colorful examples to expand upon the meaning of specific verses. I wanted to take a moment and try to share with you the joy that we have in God’s message of grace, and to let you know how much you have helped us through your Berean ministry.” (We had a great time of fellowship with these dear brethren. True fellowship is always around the Word of God.—PS).

From Texas:

“I must thank you so much for sending the *Berean Searchlight* for so many years. It has been a real blessing and has drawn me closer to our wonderful Lord.”

From Colorado:

“I am a returned missionary from Kenya, due to being knocked down and having a broken hip. One of my sons was here yesterday and saw the chart you sent me recently, *The Key to Understanding the Scriptures*. He wanted a copy. There are a few others I believe would appreciate it also. I realize how important the dispensational understanding is in Bible study. Thanks!” (Please pray for Sister Easterly as she recovers from her fall.—PS).

From Minnesota:

“I enjoyed Pastor Fredericksen’s book so much I plan to read it again. My roommate is now reading *Things That Differ*. I have been able to get her to see the difference between her *Lutheran* teachings and the Grace message.”

From Wisconsin:

“My wife and I have been greatly blessed by Pastor Stam and this organization. We have been receiving the *Searchlight* for perhaps two decades now and have greatly welcomed the right division and direction that it has provided to us in our Christian walk.”

From Ghana:

“I am immeasurably blessed and benefited by your article that the Four Gospels covered the administration of the Law, and the New Covenant began with the death of Jesus Christ. It is like cold water to me in this desert. I love to take the *Mystery*, the unique ministry of the Apostle Paul, to the rural folks of Ghana where the greatest number of unfortunate and less privileged people live. Ironically, it is where few go to preach the gospel.”

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

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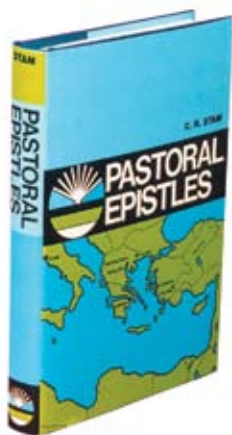
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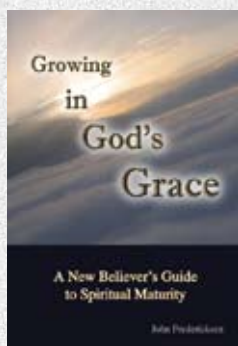


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Another weapon to have in your arsenal of literature is:



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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 38th annual Bible conference of the *Berean Bible Fellowship* is scheduled for June 17-22 at the *Cedar Lake Bible Conference Center* in Cedar Lake, Indiana. As you plan your year, mark your calendar and reserve that week for this important conference. You'll want to be sure to be there to hear grace pastors from around the country expound texts and themes from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. In addition, your editor has been invited to be the daily Bible Hour teacher. For more information, contact BBF President Pastor Floyd Baker, 1480 – 20th Street, Orange City, FL 32763, or by e-mail at: Bakerpastorf@aol.com.

There's no better place to celebrate grace than at *Celebrate Grace Camp*, hosted by Jerry and Judy Worthley. This year camp will be held near Montrose, Colorado, and will feature Pastor Dick Ware, of *Grace Fellowship Bible Church* in Sheridan, Arkansas, as the main speaker. Why not come and find out what keeps grace believers returning to this camp year after year. For more information, contact Jerry Worthley at 0627 CR 3, Canon City, CO 81212, or by e-mail at jeranjudy@yahoo.com.

Print too small? We occasionally get letters from readers who ask us to cancel their subscription because they are no longer able to read the type size found in the *Searchlight*. If the print in the *Searchlight* is getting harder for you to read, there is something you can do about it. At www.bereanbiblesociety.org you can enlarge the type size of any article, and even print them out for easier reading. If you do not have access to the internet, perhaps a friend would be willing to help.

Adding names to our mailing list: One of our favorite duties here at BBS is adding a name to the mailing list to receive the *Searchlight*, for this means that yet another soul is receiving instruction in rightly dividing the Word. However, *Searchlight* readers whose lives have been blessed by the message of grace often ask us to add the names of friends and loved ones whom they would like to see come to a knowledge of the truth. While we are only too happy to do so, we ask that in each case that you be reasonably sure that your friend or loved one wishes to be included in our readership. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

*Our cover lighthouse photo was taken by Dr. and Mrs. Edward Bedore. The *Port Washington Breakwater Lighthouse* is located in Port Washington, Wisconsin. Built in 1934, the light marks the harbor entrance and is located at the end of a long breakwater. The two-story concrete foundation has reinforced arched openings on all four sides to allow high seas to pass beneath it without doing damage.

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remind him of his future.”*

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