

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

March 2009



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

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From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we begin our *seventieth* year of publication of the *Berean Searchlight*, I began to wonder what our founding editor might have written in the very first editions of *From the Editor to You*, a feature that began in 1950. A quick check revealed that Pastor Stam's first column had to do with financial support of *Berean Bible Society*. No surprise here, for he was never shy about impressing on *Searchlight* readers their responsibility to help get the message out to others. He closed by saying, "may God give us a vision of what can be done if we yield our *all* to Him." Nor did he let up the following month, writing: "we who believe and rejoice in the unadulterated message of the grace of God have a great responsibility upon us. *We are responsible before God to do all we can to make it known to others.* Too often God's people seem to feel they ought to be complimented for having *seen* the truth! The fact is that we deserve no credit whatever until we have done our part to make it known."

The following month, the news must have been filled with rumors of war, for Pastor Stam mentions how a third world war had recently been averted. He then added, "It is so natural, when war threatens or is being waged, to spend more time with newspapers, magazines, radio—and television, than with our Bibles. It is so natural to become more occupied with all the bad news than with the *good news* God has left us here to proclaim." While reading these words, I couldn't help but think about how timeless they are. There is always some crisis in the news that would divert our attention away from the Lord and our calling if we let it. Pastor Stam then closed by challenging his readers to make sure "that our adversary does not succeed in diverting us from the particular service for which we have been left here."

If the reader has ever wondered how Pastor Stam was able to accomplish so much for the Lord and the word of His grace, surely these early editorials serve to teach us his secret. It was his unwavering, razor-sharp focus on the grace message, and his unabashed calls on grace believers to exhibit the same spirit of self-sacrifice which I know from personal experience he himself possessed. May we all catch some of his spirit, as we endeavor together to carry on the work that he engaged in so tirelessly all the years of his life.



Yours in Christ,
Pastor Ricky Kurth



YOUR GREATEST NEED

Even in these challenging financial times, the greatest need of a Christian is *not* monetary. It is rather found in Colossians 1:11, where Paul prays that we might be

“Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all...”

Unto all *what*? Whatever it is, Paul is convinced we are going to have to be “strengthened” with “all might” according to “His glorious power” to obtain it. As we read on, Paul tells us the goal of all this empowerment:

“...unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

Patience? The reason we need all this mighty empowering is so we can be *patient*? While this may *seem* anticlimactic, we submit that patience is our greatest need. We need *patience* to put up with the world’s wickedness, the abortions, etc., *patience* in knowing the Second Coming of Christ will right the world’s wrongs. We need *patience* as televangelists continue to dominate the airwaves with their dilutions and pollutions of the gospel, and *patience* as Bible teachers muddle the minds of the saints by their failure to rightly divide the Word. And since no man today has the gift of healing, we need *patience* with our physical infirmities, and longsuffering as we wait for that wonderful change that will come to our bodies at the Rapture (Phil. 3:20,21).

Finally, we need patience with *one another*, as we learn to not just put up with other believers, but to actually give them the same unconditional love and acceptance God extends to us. Moses was patient with unbelieving Pharaoh, but lost his patience with his brethren. How like us! But ask yourself, when did David show greater spiritual strength, when he *slew* Goliath, or when he *refused* to slay Saul?

Paul says we are to be strengthened to all patience “according to His glorious power,” but what *is* God’s glorious power? The destructive power He exhibited at the Red Sea is called “glorious” (Ex. 15:6), but we suggest that God’s glorious power *today* is seen in His patience. The fact that God could put an end to the abortions and religious confusion, but doesn’t, is His most glorious power in the dispensation of grace.

The apostle concludes by praying that we might be patient “with joyfulness,” perhaps the hardest part of longsuffering. God doesn’t chafe under the vexations He receives from the world, religion, and the Body of Christ, *and neither should we!*

If this kind of power were not available to us, Paul would not be praying that we might have it. And so may his prayer also be the prayer of *our* hearts, as we enthusiastically study the only *source* of spiritual strength, God’s Word rightly divided.

—Pastor Kurth

The Mystery and the Resurrection of Christ

By Paul M. Sadler

“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

—I Corinthians 15:13,14

**“I ONCE WAS BLIND,
BUT NOW I SEE!”**

The evidence for the bodily resurrection of Christ is so overwhelming that even those who were once skeptics have had to concede that it is true. In fact, many of them have come to know Christ as their personal Savior, in their attempt to disprove the resurrection. The *Ministry Resource* by Robert C. Stone has documented the following three historical examples:

Dr. Simon Greenleaf was a skeptic from Harvard Law School who wrote three volumes on the laws of legal evidence, and mocked Christians in his law classes. But he was challenged by Christian

students to apply his own book to the resurrection of Christ. Taking the challenge, he concluded that the evidence was so convincing, he became a believer. He later wrote, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established facts of history.”

Dr. Benjamin Gilbert-West and Lord Littleton were from Cambridge. So fed up with Christianity they wanted to destroy it, so they took a leave of absence to study and write a book to refute both the resurrection and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. As a result of their study, they too became ardent believers and wrote: “Reject not, until you have examined the evidence.”

Dr. Frank Morrison, a lawyer and engineer, was brought up in a rationalistic background. He liked the teachings of Jesus, but thought the resurrection was a myth that was tacked on. He, too, wanted to write a book to refute it,

but in the process of writing, he, like the others, committed his life to Christ. His findings are in his book, “Who Moved the Stone?”¹

UNIQUE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

The fact of the resurrection of Christ and the hope of the resurrection were clearly taught in the Old Testament Scriptures, of which the Four Gospels are an extension. Although these writ-

that at first glance seem to be somewhat puzzling, but upon further investigation they are actually profound in what they teach. For example, after Joseph of Arimathaea had prepared our Lord’s body for burial, after the manner of the Jews, the record goes on to add:

“And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed” (Matt. 27:60).



ings foretold Christ’s resurrection from the dead, it does not mean that those who lived in time past understood this glorious event. On more than one occasion our Lord spoke to the disciples about His resurrection, the truth of which went sailing right over their heads. It wasn’t until *after* He rose from the dead that the eyes of their understanding were opened to the fact that Moses and the prophets were speaking about Him. Therefore, He wanted them to see, “it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:46).

In addition to the *indisputable* evidence of the grave clothes and eyewitness accounts, there are a number of corroborating statements about Christ’s resurrection

Interestingly, when Joseph readied his tomb for his eventual departure from this life, he cut it out of a *solid rock*. Little did he realize that he was preparing the tomb for another to temporarily occupy it. Unlike the Catacombs that had numerous entrances and exits in biblical times,² Joseph’s tomb only had one way in, which was the same way out. We believe this was by divine design. When Joseph laid the body of our Lord in the tomb and rolled the massive two ton stone in front of the entrance, there was no rear exit for Christ to escape or for someone to secretly remove the body and later claim He rose again. Furthermore, the tomb was secured by a watch.

“The chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,



Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can” (Matt. 27:62-65).

When a Roman watch was set it would have meant the guards entered the tomb to make sure the body was there. Those were different times. If a guard on duty allowed his prisoner to escape or in this case if the body was missing, he was examined and then executed (Acts 12:18,19 cf. 16:27). So there was absolutely *no* question that Christ’s body was in the tomb when the massive stone was rolled in front of the entrance. Normally a Roman watch consisted of sixteen soldiers,³ four of whom were at the entrance of the tomb at all times. This helps explain the passage that after the

resurrection “some” of the watch, that is, of those on duty, sought out the chief priest and not Pilate, hoping to save their lives (Matt. 28:11-15).

The lesson is this, God would have us understand that the tomb was made *totally* secure by both believers and unbelievers. The only plausible explanation for the tomb being empty was that Christ had risen from the dead forevermore. This is one of many infallible proofs. Shortly after the Lord arose that fateful morning, an angel descended from heaven and supernaturally rolled back the stone from the entrance of the doorway for all to see that the tomb was *empty*.

The angel then sat on top of the great stone. On one side of the stone were the keepers who were paralyzed with fear. They stood there as dead men when they saw the angel whose countenance was like lightning. The soldiers represent all those who reject Christ and deny His resurrection. On the other side of the stone were the women who came seeking the Lord to anoint Him. To them the angel said: “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28:5,6). He’s alive! Therefore, the women signify all those who place their faith in the Lord and believe He rose from the dead. May I ask you dear friend a soul-searching question, on which side of the stone are you standing?

Another statement found in the gospel according to Luke that some might call a throw-away statement, also has a great deal

of significance. Always remember that everything recorded in the Word of God is there for a reason, even though there may be some things we don't fully understand. In such cases we need to simply wait on additional light.

“And he [Joseph] took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid” (Luke 23:53).

While the security of the gravesite was primarily meant for the skeptic, the statement about the tomb “wherein never man before was laid,” was intended for those who know the Scriptures. The reason this is important has to do with an unusual event that took place in the Old Testament.

You will recall near the end of Elijah's days on earth he asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken away. Elisha answered, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (II Kings 2:9). Elijah told Elisha that if he saw him when he was taken, his request would be granted. When Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire Elisha witnessed the entire glorious event; therefore he was given a double portion of the Spirit, which served him well all the days of his ministry.

After Elisha died, bands of the Moabites invaded the land of Israel. One day Elisha's countrymen were in the process of burying one of their own when they saw a unit of Moabites out on a reconnaissance mission. In their haste to get out of harm's way they lowered the dead man's body into the sepulcher of Elisha, to which the Scriptures go on to say:

“And when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet” (II Kings 13:21).

Even in death the blessing of God was upon Elisha. Of course, in time past miraculous manifestations were commonplace. With this in mind, in the case of the resurrection of Christ, some might conclude that perhaps one of the prophets had been previously buried in Joseph's tomb and when Christ was placed there He simply revived. After all, this wouldn't have been the first time that something similar happened, as noted above.

To avoid any question in this regard, the Holy Spirit specifically states concerning Joseph's tomb, “wherein never man before was laid.” Here God would have us understand that Christ was not merely resuscitated, but that He conquered death and rose again the third day *never* to die again. Only Christ has a glorified resurrected body. He alone has immortality at this hour (I Tim. 6:16).

PETER AND PAUL

“Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed” (I Cor. 15:11).

Other than special Easter Sunday services very little is said about the resurrection of Christ in pulpits across America these days. This is a sad commentary on the state of the Church, which, for the most part, is more interested in being all things to all people. If we study the ministries of Peter and Paul, Christ's resurrection was the *central theme* of their preaching and teaching in their respective programs.

When Paul states, “*Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed,*” he is not saying that the twelve preached Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery. He is rather saying that both he and the twelve preached the *fact* that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, which the preceding context where this passage is found bears out.

“He ripped the gates of death from their moorings and carried them away in His resurrection...”

It is true, of course, the widow’s son of Zarephath, the man who touched Elisha’s bones, and Lazarus all rose from the dead, but they all share one thing in common—they all died again and their bodies of humiliation still lie in the dust of the earth to this day. Death still has mastery over them. This was not the case with Christ; He actually destroyed the devil that had the power of death. He ripped the gates of death from their moorings and carried them away in His resurrection so we would no longer need to live in fear of death.

When Christ rose on the third day, He came out of the grave with a glorified resurrected body that death had no power over. In His own words, the Lord said after His resurrection, “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18). This wonderful truth is woven throughout the messages

of both Peter and Paul. It is the basis upon which the twofold purpose of the resurrection rests.

Having established the fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ we now want to consider the *purpose* of it according to the two programs of God.

We begin with the prophetic program. As we go back in the corridor of time, the prophet Nathan came into the court of King David one day and spoke these words:

“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (II Sam. 7:16).

David was promised that his house, his throne, and his kingdom would be established forever. The house of David speaks of his posterity from whom God would raise up a Righteous Branch to sit on his throne (Jer. 23:5). This will literally take place when the millennial kingdom is set up upon the earth, which is the *preamble* to the everlasting kingdom on the new earth.

When the Apostle Peter addressed his countrymen on the day of Pentecost, he presented a foolproof argument in regard to the resurrection of Christ that would impress any defense attorney. First, Peter quotes from Psalm 16 where David said,

“Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades*], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:26,27).

Peter then points out to his hearers that David could not have been referring to himself

simply because his tomb was with them to that very day. They all knew David was buried in Bethlehem. And, furthermore, David's body did see corruption! Peter effectively concludes that the patriarch was speaking about the Righteous Branch that God would raise up from the seed of David. His closing argument is: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30,31).

This, then, was the prophetic purpose of the resurrection of Christ. He was raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David in fulfillment of prophecy. In the coming day of the Lord, Christ will sit on the throne of His glory and execute justice and judgment on the earth. However, due to Israel's rejection of her Messiah the prophetic program has been *temporarily* suspended. Today, while Christ is in royal exile, God has made known the unsearchable riches of Christ which were hidden from past ages and generations.

With the introduction of the Mystery program by the Apostle Paul, we learn that God also had a *secret purpose* in mind concerning the resurrection of Christ.

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (II Tim. 2:7,8).

Paul calls to Timothy's remembrance that the Jesus Christ of the seed of David, who was resurrected to be seated on the throne of David, is the *same* Jesus who was

raised from the dead according to his gospel. In addition to confirming the fact of the resurrection of Christ, Paul presents it in a completely new light. The purpose of Christ's resurrection according to Paul's gospel is to be viewed in relation to *salvation*.

"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Christ was "delivered for our offenses," but if he didn't raise from the dead we are yet in our sins and our faith is in vain. The resurrection of Christ was the crowning grace whereby God could *justify* unworthy sinners. You see, it is one thing to claim that Christ is the once-for-all sacrifice for sin; however, this truth could easily be challenged if unsubstantiated. But the undeniable proof that this statement is true is that God raised His Son from the dead. The resurrection is the *receipt* that full payment was made and accepted to God's satisfaction. Paul, then, was the first to proclaim that Christ's resurrection is the *secret* of our justification!

The practical side of the resurrection according to Paul's gospel has to do with our identification with Christ. This, too, was a new revelation that was committed to Paul.

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

This is our spiritual baptism in which we are identified with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. In the infinite wisdom of God, the day Christ died our

old man was crucified with Him. When they placed the Savior in the tomb our old man was buried with Him. And wonder of wonders, with the tomb completely secure, as we have seen, Christ supernaturally rose from the dead, leaving our old man buried forevermore while our new man was raised with Him. All that remains is to put this into practice.




If a loved one purchased a gift card in your name, it really doesn't benefit you unless you use it. You might even be struggling financially, but you keep forgetting to use the gift card that could essentially help you.⁴ The same is true with the spiritual things of God. He has identified us with Christ, which means we don't have to get bogged down in our life with sin, if we simply *apply* this life-changing truth to our every day experience.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11).

The word “reckon” here in the original language is the Greek word *“logizomai”* which has the idea, according to Thayer, “to count” or “to take into account.” **As far as God is concerned**, our “old nature” has been crucified with Christ and is therefore dead and buried. We know, however, experientially speaking, it is alive and well in our members because there is an ongoing conflict daily

between our old and new nature.

Here's the key to not allowing sin to control your life, you are *dead* to the sins of lying, cheating, stealing, cursing, fornication, etc. You don't have to lie, reckon it or *count it* to be so—Christ died for that sin and buried it for you. You need to simply leave it where you found it. When Christ rose again the third day God raised up our “new nature” so that we might walk in newness of life, that is, *resurrected life*. A measure of the same power that raised Christ from the dead is also at our disposal on a daily basis. You are probably thinking, “Well I've never experienced it.” Sure you have, on the day you were saved it transformed your life. You experienced the power of God!

We want to challenge you to follow Paul in his passion, “to know Him and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10). Every believer is tied into this power grid by faith, but to have constant access to this source of power we need to *yield* ourselves to the new nature, daily, which is created in holiness and righteousness. As we yield our members as instruments of righteousness, the Spirit of God *empowers* us to more effectively serve the Lord without the guilt of sin in our life (Rom. 8:10-13). This truly is the abundant life in Christ that ultimately will be to the praise of His glory. 

Endnotes

1. *The Ministry Resource* Website of Robert C. Stone, Bellingham, Washington, www.EagleFlight.org.
2. ©iStockphoto.com/Tonis Valing.
3. ©iStockphoto.com/RMAX.
4. ©iStockphoto.com/jjauregui.

Pennsylvania Bible Conference

Dates: April 24-26, 2009

Location: *Quality Inn*, 625 Quentin Road
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Speaker: Paul M. Sadler, *Berean Bible Society*

Conference will include: Preaching the Word, Question and Answer times, Prayer sessions, children's classes, and refreshments/fellowship.

For additional information, please contact: William Schaeffer

Phone: (717) 949-3020, E-mail: hitnmis@verizon.net

For reservations at *Quality Inn*, please call: 1-800-626-8242

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Northern Grace Youth Camp 2009 Schedule



May 1-3.....	Spring Youth Retreat
May 22-25.....	Work Weekend
June 26-July 4.....	Counselor Training
June 28-July 4.....	First Family Camp—Pastor Kevin Sadler
July 5-11.....	Junior Camp (3rd-5th grade)
July 12-18.....	Intermediate Camp (5th-7th grade)
July 19-25.....	Junior High Camp (7th-9th grade)
July 26-August 1.....	Senior High Camp (10th-'09 graduates)
August 2-8.....	Second Family Camp—Pastor Chuck Barrett
September 11-13.....	Women's Retreat
September 25-27.....	Men's Retreat
October 16-18.....	Fall Youth Retreat

Visit www.ngyc.org for more information on camp rates and to register or call Dave Green at 888-999-6492 with any questions. The camp is also hiring counselors and volunteer cooks.





The Believer's Walk

in This Present Evil Age

By Cornelius R. Stam

“Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

Those who hold that Pentecost marks the historical beginning of the Body of Christ, the Church of this age, should examine carefully those Scriptures which deal with the Holy Spirit and His work. A simple comparison for example, of His operation at Pentecost with His operation in this present dispensation, as outlined in the Pauline epistles, can lead to but one conclusion: that the baptism with, or in, the Spirit at Pentecost has been superseded by another baptism altogether—that by which believers are baptized into one body—and that the Body of Christ did not exist (except in the mind of God) when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. If our Fundamentalist leaders will verify and accept this fact, they will have the answer to the

“Pentecostal” fanaticism that is sweeping the country today.

THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION AT PENTECOST

Concerning the one hundred twenty believers gathered in the upper room at Pentecost, we read:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4, R.V.).

This, of course, is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit took complete possession of them.¹ Those who have come to appreciate the meaning of the Bible word *baptism*, will see at once the connection with the Lord's promise that His own should be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Indeed, they were “filled” with the Spirit (Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of the promise that they should be “baptized” with the Spirit (Acts 1:5)² and the result of this

baptism, this filling, with the Spirit, was not only that they possessed miraculous powers, but also that they lived the kind of lives which God's people prior to that time had failed to live, and this is the particular matter with which we are here concerned.

Mark well: we do not have here an *exhortation* to be filled with the Spirit, as we have later in the Pauline epistles. Rather, we have a simple statement of fact: "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*"

The one hundred twenty had, of course, been much like any other group of believers in history. They had not all been equally spiritual or devoted or faithful. Some had been more so than others, and where some had excelled in one virtue, others had excelled in another. Yet now they were *all FILLED* with the Spirit, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

The thoughtful student of Scripture will, of course, ask why all these believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. Was it, perhaps, because they, as a group, had been more godly than those before them? The gospel records prove that this is not so. Peter boasted, Thomas doubted, James and John sought personal gain, and when our Lord was taken prisoner, "they all forsook Him and fled." Was it then because they had prayed long or earnestly enough for the Spirit to come upon them and take control? No; they had been instructed to go to Jerusalem, not to *pray* for the Holy Spirit to come, as some suppose,

but to "*wait* for the [fulfillment of the] *promise*" regarding the Spirit (Acts 1:4,5)—and right here is the answer to our question. The believers at Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit, not because they were more godly or spiritual than others; not because they had prayed long or earnestly enough for the Spirit to come, but because *the time had arrived for the fulfillment³ of a divine promise*. The Old Testament prophets and the Lord Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit should some day come to take control of God's people, and *that day had come*.

THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION TODAY

The Apostle Paul never anywhere says that all the members of the Body of Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is surely clear from the record that the Corinthians and the Galatians, for example, were not filled with the Spirit, for Paul's letters to these churches contain much of rebuke and correction. And it is also evident that believers today are seldom, if ever, filled with the Spirit. The filling with the Spirit is now a goal, an attainment, which the apostle, by inspiration, sets before us. We are not all filled with the Spirit as a matter of fact. While the Spirit does indeed dwell within us by God's grace, we must daily appropriate His help and blessing by faith. Hence the apostle constantly exhorts believers and prays for them, that they may be:

"filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19).

“filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

“filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phil. 1:11).

“filled with the knowledge of His will” (Col. 1:9).

But *why* are *we* not automatically filled with the Spirit as the believers were at Pentecost? We will proceed to answer this question, but let the reader not fail to first recognize the *fact* that the believers under Peter at Pentecost were *all* filled with the Spirit, while the believers under Paul, later on, were not.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

God has always held His people responsible to obey Him. By holding them thus responsible, however, He has simply demonstrated their *inability* to obey Him. But how, it may be asked, can God justly hold them responsible to obey Him perfectly, when He knows they *cannot*? The answer is that their inability to obey is not due merely to human limitation, but to human *sin*. Men are not merely to be pitied; they are to be censured and condemned for their disobedience (though Christ, of course, bore the believer’s condemnation for him). When Paul, by the Spirit, writes: “*Ye cannot do the things that ye would*” (Gal. 5:17), he does not mean merely that we are so helpless or limited, but rather that we are so *bad*, so *corrupt*, by nature, that we cannot do the things that we would. “*The flesh*,” he says, “*lusteth against the Spirit*.” Though “*with the mind I myself serve the law of God*,” he

declares, “*I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind*” (Rom. 7:23,25). This is what the apostle means by “*the law of sin which is in my members*” (Rom. 7:23), and why he says: “*In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing*” (Rom. 7:18).



Ever since the fall, human nature has been depraved and bad. Parents do not need to teach their children to lie or to steal or to do other wrongs. They do these things naturally. But parents do have to teach and train their children to do what is right, nor does the learning come easily. Well do we remember an older brother once saying to father: “But Papa, it’s so *hard* to be good!”

Thus the apostle points out that it is “a law,” something we can write down as a *fixed rule*, that man by nature—even the “old man” in the believer—is hopelessly depraved, and tends to do wrong rather than right. This is a truth that the unsaved have great

difficulty acknowledging, and it is also why *“they that are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom. 8:8). Again, it explains why even those who love God sincerely can sometimes grieve Him so deeply.

God kept His people under the Law for 1500 years to demonstrate this fact, giving them written commands to obey. From the very beginning to the very end of the dispensation of law they seemed determined to *disobey* and *displease* Him. The dispensation began with the people breaking the very first commandment and dancing like heathen around a golden calf as their god, and it ended with their crucifying the Son of God and stubbornly standing by their awful deed, even when God offered them mercy and forgiveness.

About 600 years before Christ, as Israel lost her national (not spiritual) supremacy and the “times of the Gentiles” began, God made it plain that the law would not produce, and declared it “old.”⁴ At that time He promised to make a *new* covenant with His people, under which they would spontaneously do His will (Jer. 31:31-34). In connection with this new covenant God also made another promise—that of the coming of the Holy Spirit to work in and through His people.

This prophesied work of the Holy Spirit with His people Israel should be clearly understood. In Joel 2:28,29, God promised to supernaturally *cause* them to prophesy, etc., but in Ezekiel 36:26,27, He also promised to supernaturally *cause* them to do His will:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

“And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.”

Thus God would show that the only way in which even His own people can perfectly obey Him is when He *takes possession* of them and *causes* them to do His will. Indeed, He is still demonstrating this today. With all the blessings and advantages of the dispensation of grace, we still do not obey and serve Him as we ought, simply because, contrary to popular opinion, *none* of us has been baptized with the Spirit.⁵

THE CONDUCT OF THE BELIEVERS AT PENTECOST

At Pentecost the time had come, so far as prophecy was concerned, for the fulfillment of the promise concerning the Holy Spirit. *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:1,4).

We must be careful to notice the immediate change that took place in the behavior of these believers, now that the Holy Spirit had come to take possession of them. Not only did they speak with tongues and prophesy and work miracles, but *they all began living for one another*.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

“And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44,45).

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.

“And laid them down at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32,34,35).

Never before had the disciples of Christ even approached such a spirit of utter selflessness and love for one another. In spite of the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount and our Lord’s repeated exhortations to sell and distribute their earthly goods and live for one another, they—even the twelve—had heretofore been fully as human and selfish as those who had gone before them.

One day James and John came to ask a special favor of Christ: that *they* might occupy the first places in the kingdom, sitting, the one at Christ’s right hand and the other at His left! (Mark 10:37). Modest fellows! And the other ten were really no different at heart, for we read: *“When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John”* (Ver. 41). We can almost hear them exclaim to each other: “Who do James and John think

they are!” Nor was this the first time the apostles had *“disputed among themselves who should be the greatest”* (Mark 9:34).

But now, suddenly, all this was changed! Now each one put self aside and placed others first. And, as Jeremiah had predicted, this came from the heart. Mark well: it was of a multitude numbering more than five thousand (Acts 4:4) that we read that they were of one heart and of one soul, and sold their lands and houses and brought the proceeds to the apostles for distribution among the needy. Imagine the freedom and joy and blessedness that must have prevailed among the disciples under these conditions! These were indeed as the days of heaven upon earth!



God’s children in this present dispensation—the so-called Pentecostalists included—have never lived together as the believers at Pentecost did. Imagine even suggesting having all things common among believers today! Those who cry “Back to Pentecost” would not, we fear, be the first to step up and hand over their property⁶ as Barnabas and *all* the believing property owners did at Pentecost.

Indeed, it would be wrong if we did this today, for the Spirit's instruction for this present evil age is:

"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8).

PENTECOST RELATED TO THE KINGDOM, NOT TO THE BODY

Pentecost was an earnest of the kingdom reign of Christ, when peace and prosperity will prevail on earth and men will not need to lay up store for the future. But as Israel stubbornly rejected the King and His kingdom and judgment seemed imminent, God graciously intervened and ushered in the dispensation of grace, under which we now live.

During this present dispensation God is doing a thing never once mentioned in Old Testament prophecy: forming a body of believers composed of Jews and Gentiles, reconciled to Himself by the cross (Eph. 2:16). This body is called "the body of Christ," since its members are eternally and inseparably united to Christ by one divine baptism. This baptism, in turn, is something altogether separate and distinct from the baptism with the Spirit at Pentecost.

That the Pentecostal baptism with the Spirit has been superseded by another baptism is evident from the following facts:

At Pentecost *the Lord Jesus Christ was the Baptizer*, and He baptized the believers with, or in, the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 3:11: "He [Christ] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost..." (Cf. Luke 3:16).

John 15:26: "The Comforter... whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth...shall testify of Me."

John 16:7: "If I depart, I will send Him unto you."

Today, under the dispensation of grace, however, *the Holy Spirit is the Baptizer*, baptizing believers into Christ and His body.

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

Gal. 3:27,28: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

"...contrary to popular opinion, none of us has been baptized with the Spirit."

To those who would trace the Body of Christ back to Pentecost, we ask: Where in early Acts do we read of the Holy Spirit baptizing Jews and Gentiles into one joint-body, the Body of Christ? Until Cornelius, the believers preached the Word *"to none but unto the Jews only"* (Acts 11:19), and surely the *reconciliation* of Jews and Gentiles to God in one body could not be preached until the Jews as well as the Gentiles had been

alienated from God. This is why we read of “*the casting away of them [Israel]*” in connection with “*the reconciling of the world*” (Rom. 11:15).

“For God hath concluded them ALL in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32).

Certainly God had not yet cast Israel away or concluded her in unbelief at Pentecost, for at Pentecost and for some little time thereafter, God still dealt with Israel as a nation, pleading with her to repent, so that her Messiah might return and bring the long-promised times of refreshing (Acts 3:19-21).

To those, on the other hand, who would bring Pentecost into the present dispensation, we ask: Where is the Scriptural warrant for the continuance of a Pentecostal experience in this dispensation? It is clear from Acts and from Paul’s epistles that the Pentecostal program has been suspended because of the rejection of Christ and His kingdom. Certainly the gifts of prophecy, tongues and (supernatural) knowledge have passed away (I Cor. 13:8). And so with the gifts of healing (Rom. 8:22,23; II Cor. 4:16-5:4; I Tim. 5:23; II Tim. 4:20; etc.). Paul himself, who had been saved during the Pentecostal era and had possessed miraculous powers at least as great as those of the twelve, writes concerning his own illness:

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My

***strength is made perfect in weakness...*” (II Cor. 12:8,9).**

And as to Pentecostal *conduct* in this dispensation: where, even among the “Pentecostalists,” do we find it? The early chapters of Acts record neither sin nor blunder in the lives of the believers at Pentecost,⁷ but there is plenty of both, not only among the “Pentecostalists” as a group, but in each individual “Pentecostalist.” And as to selling all and living for one another, many of their leaders are rich and increased in goods while those under them suffer need, both rich and poor bearing witness that the Pentecostal program has broken down and passed away. Indeed, it passed away during Paul’s lifetime, for whereas in Acts 4:34 we read: “*Neither was there any among them that lacked,*” we later find Paul taking up collections for “*the poor saints at Jerusalem*” (Rom. 15:26). This is because the King and His kingdom were refused, but “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Rom. 5:20), and today we enjoy the blessings of “*the dispensation of the grace of God*” (Eph. 3:2).

In spite of the claims of the “Pentecostalists,” it is evident, both from Scripture and from observation, that the Holy Spirit is not “poured out” for miraculous power upon believers today, and that men are not supernaturally possessed and *caused* to live lives pleasing to God. Yet, for us there are greater spiritual *victories* to be gained, as we appropriate by faith what God provides by grace.

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. Much as whatever takes possession of the mind is said to *fill* it.

2. Dr. Bullinger, in his theory regarding “the Giver and His gifts,” argues that the Pentecostal believers were filled merely with “holy spirit,” not *the Holy Spirit*, since the article is not found in the original in these two verses. We reject this as unscriptural. The “gift” referred to in Acts 2:38, 8:20, etc., is not said to be given *by* the Spirit. The “gift” is the Holy Spirit Himself, given by the Father and the Son (John 14:16,17). Thus in Acts 19, when the apostle found that the disciples there had not received *pneuma hagon*, he “laid his hands upon them” and “*to pneuma to hagon* (Gr. *the Spirit, the holy*) came on them” (Ver. 2,6; see also Luke 2:25,26 cf.

II Pet. 1:21, John 7:39, Acts 11:15,16, Eph. 1:13, in the original).

3. Some look upon Pentecost merely as a *foreshadowing* of the promised Millennial blessing. We believe it was the beginning of the *fulfillment* of the promise, but that the complete fulfillment was interrupted by the dispensation of grace. Note: “*This is that...*” (Acts 2:16).

4. “In that He saith, A *new* covenant, He hath made the first old” (Heb. 8:13).

5. Even if we were, of course, the Spirit would not operate in us as He did in the believers at Pentecost (See I Cor. 13:8).

6. ©iStockphoto.com/Andy Dean.

7. Ananias and Sapphira tried to join the company by deceit, but were stricken dead.

Question Box

*“In your January Question Box, you answered a question about Ecclesiastes 9:5 by saying that ‘the dead know nothing’ of what goes on **here on earth**. But doesn’t your reference to Revelation 6:9-11 show that these souls in heaven **DO** know what is going on here on earth?”*

In response to a question about Ecclesiastes 9:5, we showed from Scripture that the dead are unaware of what goes on *here on earth*. We then cited Revelation 6:9-11 to prove that while the dead are unaware of life *on earth*, they are conscious, thinking and speaking *in heaven*, and not sleeping in the grave, as affirmed by those who teach soul sleep.

The martyred Tribulation saints in heaven mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11 will only have to be aware of what is happening in heaven to know that the Lord has not yet *left* heaven to take vengeance on earth. That is, they will be able to clearly see that He is still sitting at the right hand of God, and they will know from Psalm 110:1 that this means He has not yet gone to earth to make His enemies His footstool. In other words, they will only have to be aware of His presence in heaven to know that He has not yet gone to earth to avenge their deaths.

—Pastor Kurth

A GUIDE TO GODLINESS

Part 5

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1).

This beloved verse has long been used as a proof text for the doctrine of eternal security. But while the eternal security of the believer is taught in many Scriptures, we would invite the reader to consider that security is *not* the subject of *this* verse. It *would* be a proof text for eternal security if the verse ended with the words “*in Christ Jesus.*” But since the verse rather ends with, “*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,*” if this verse *is* about security, it is teaching *conditional* security, for it is then saying there is only “no condemnation” for those in Christ who walk after the Spirit.

We are aware that new Bible versions omit the last ten words of the verse, citing their absence in what they call the better Greek texts. However, we do not believe these texts to be better, and we believe these last ten words *should* be included in our Bibles, if we are to understand the meaning of this verse in its context.

It is often overlooked that Romans 8:1 begins with a “*therefore,*” and good Bible students know that when you see a “*therefore,*” you should always look to see what it’s *there for*. Romans 8 follows Romans 7, where Paul has just finished describing the *self-condemnation* he experienced when he tried to use the Law of Moses to help him with sin (7:24).

Here it should be remembered that just as there is more than one kind of *salvation* in the Bible (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 13:11; Phil. 1:19, etc.), there is also more than one kind of *condemnation*. While the Bible does speak of *eternal* condemnation (John 5:24), it also refers to other varieties (Luke 23:40). And we would suggest that our text is saying that walking after the Spirit will eliminate the self-condemnation that is the subject of the context.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

“The law of sin and death” is the law that says, “You sin, you die.” It is the Law of Moses, for since all have sinned, we read of the Law that *“the letter killeth”* (II Cor. 3:6), and so it was well-named *“the ministration of death”* (II Cor. 3:7). We know that the Law of Moses is the subject here since the next verse goes on to say that the Law could not save us (Rom. 8:3), and who would think that any law but the Law of Moses could save us?

Now if the law of sin and death says, “You sin, you die,” then whatever *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ”* is, it must be something that sets us free from the Law of Moses. This can only be the *“law”* that says there is *“life in Christ,”* i.e., the law that says if you believe on Christ, you can be saved from the condemnation of the Law (Gal. 3:13). This is certainly good news for the unbeliever, but in the context, Paul is talking about his experience as a believer.

It is true that the unbeliever who sins will die. But it is also true that *the believer* who sins will die. He won’t die the *eternal* death that awaits those who die without Christ (Rev. 20:14,15), but he will die the “Christian death” which is the subject of Romans 6-8, the death wherein all of a believer’s spiritual vital signs are flat-lined and he enters a comatose spiritual state.

What’s the solution to this problem? Well, the solution for the unbeliever who is condemned by the law of sin and death is to believe on Christ and receive eternal life. And we would submit that the solution is the same for the believer whose sin is causing his Christian experience to shrivel up and die. Not that he needs to get saved again. He needs only to realize that while there is death in sin, there is *“life in Christ.”* Paul explains what he means by this in the next verse:

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).



The Law of Moses was strong enough to save us *if we could keep it* (Lev. 18:5; Luke 10:28; Rom. 2:7; 10:5; Gal. 3:12). The weakness of the Law was found in that we could *not* keep it. It was weak *through the flesh*. This is similar to how a metal serving fork is strong enough to lift a ten pound turkey, but if you insert the fork into the bird and try to lift it, the bird's flesh will tear away, and you will not be able to lift it in this fashion. The fork is strong, but it is *weak through the flesh*.

When it was found that men could not keep the Law well enough to be saved, God sent His own Son *"in the likeness of sinful flesh."* When our Lord was born, He was *"made in the likeness of men"* (Phil. 2:7), but when God sent Him to Calvary, it was *there* that He was made *"in the likeness of sinful flesh,"* as He was *"numbered with the transgressors"* (Isa. 53:12).



And every believer knows *why* God sent His Son to die on Calvary's cross. It was, as our text says, *"for sin."* This phrase is used to describe Levitical offerings that were made *"for sin"* (Lev. 6:26; 9:15, etc.). And so Isaiah predicted that when God sent His Son to Calvary, He would *"make His soul an offering for sin"* (Isa. 53:10).

It was also at Calvary that God *"condemned sin in the flesh."* This is key to our understanding of this passage. Every believer needs something to condemn the sin that resides in his flesh (Rom. 7:17-20). The Law of Moses certainly *looks* like it would fill the bill, so to speak, for it certainly condemns sin! But while the Law looks like just the ticket to deal with sin, Paul has just finished teaching us in Romans 7 that when we use the Law to condemn sin in our lives, it leads to feelings of self-condemnation and despair.

It is here in Romans 8 that Paul tells us what to rather use to condemn sin in our flesh, i.e., *the cross of Christ*. It was *at the cross* that God tells us *exactly* what He thinks of sin, for it was at the cross that He showed His willingness to pour out His wrath on His own Son when He was made sin for us. If God was willing to punish even His own beloved Son for sin, sin must indeed be a heinous thing in His sight.

And this is all we need to keep in mind to condemn sin in our lives. This is why after Paul rebuked the Galatians earlier in his epistle to them for trying to use the Law to deal with sin, He reminded them that before their eyes *"Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you"* (Gal. 3:1). This is also why we observe the Lord's Supper, *"for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the*

Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:26). For it was *the Cross* that paid for our sins and condemns the sin in our flesh,

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

The word "*that*" refers to the *purpose* or *object* of something. Here, the purpose of Christ's death for our sins was not to enable us to continue in sin, but rather to fulfill the righteousness of the Law. And the object of condemning sin at Calvary was to tell us what God thinks of sin, and provide us with all the motivation we need to "*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

Notice though that Paul does *not* say that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled "*by*" us, but rather "*in*" us. Just as there is a difference between surgery done *by* a doctor and *in* a doctor, the perfect righteousness of the law cannot be fulfilled *by* us even after we are saved. But it can be fulfilled *in* us, for just as "*he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*" (Rom. 13:8), so when we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, we also fulfill the righteousness of the Law.

This is why after reminding the Galatians that love fulfills the law, Paul likewise told them, "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*" (5:14-16). After telling them earlier in Galatians that the Law won't help them deal with sin, here he tells them what will! Just as in the military, the best defense is often a good offense, so the best way to not walk after the flesh is to walk after the Spirit.

Walking after the Spirit has nothing to do with the claims of Pentecostalism. About the only other way the Greek word for "*walk*" is translated in our King James Version is *to be occupied with* (Heb. 13:9). Hence to *walk* in the Spirit is *to be occupied with the things of the Spirit*. In other words, the way to say no to the sins of the flesh is to say yes to the things of the Spirit. The way to get the things of the world out of your life is by *crowding them out* with the things of the Spirit.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "*neither give place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:27). Don't give the devil any room in your life! If your life is *filled* with the things of the Lord, there will be no room in your life for sin, for not even the devil himself can add a single thing to a life that is already *filled*. You can completely submerge an inverted glass in water, and the water will not enter the glass, for the glass is *filled* with air. And so if we would only "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18), there will be no room in our lives for the lusts of the flesh.

Of course, the believer's *walk* begins with his *thoughts*, and so Paul goes on to say:

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).

To Be Continued!



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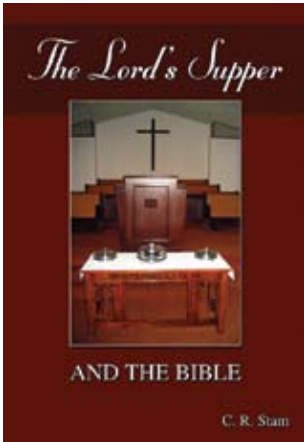
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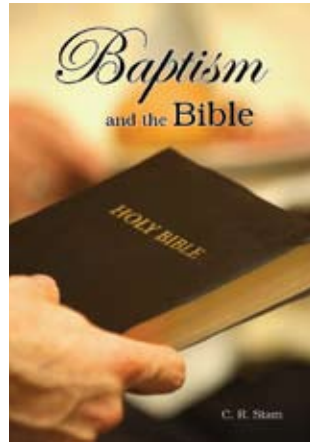
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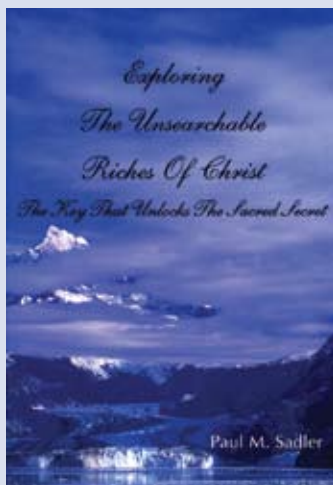
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News and Announcements

New Email Address: We recently learned that we could save \$100 a year by having our email address at the same domain as our web site. Since our email storage will also jump from 50 MB to 1 GB, and since berean@bereanbiblesociety.org is easier to remember than our old address anyway, we jumped at the chance. This change will also reduce our mountain of daily spam, since spammers will have to find us all over again. Our old address of berean@execpc.com is paid up through the end of the year though, so we will receive mail at both addresses until then.

Pennsylvania Meetings: The saints at *Grace Family Bible Church* in Duncansville didn't get a long enough peek at prophecy in our meetings there last fall, and so Pastor Kurth will be returning to share *A Peek at the Peaks of Prophecy, Part 2*. Mark your calendar for April 18,19, and contact Pastor James Zaebst for further information: 814-696-4366.

South Dakota Bible Conference: *Dakota Bible Institute* cordially invites you to attend the Bible conference that will mark the occasion of their spring graduation ceremonies. Pastor Ricky Kurth will be bringing the messages May 15-17 at the school's campus in Tabor, SD. To learn more, contact Pastor Finck at 30448 427th Ave, Tabor, SD 57063, or email him at joelfinck@parsonspublishingcompany.com.

Celebrate Grace Camp will be held this year July 26-30 at *Mountain-top Retreat* near Montrose, Colorado, with Pastor Ricky Kurth teaching the Scriptures. If you live in Colorado, or would like to make its scenic wonders part of your summer vacation this year, you won't want to miss this precious time of fellowship around God's Word, rightly divided. For further information, call Jerry Worthley at 719-276-2469, or email Tyrone Worthley at rone14er@yahoo.com.

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



The *Cana Island Lighthouse* in Bailey's Harbor, Wisconsin, is Door County's most photographed and painted light. An 1880 storm known as the *Alpena Gale* destroyed seven ships nearby. Visitors to this island light can walk across the rock causeway from the mainland.

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