

The

Berean Searchlight

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

January 2003



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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

The *Berean Searchlight* was first published in 1940 from the basement of the Preakness Community Church in Preakness, New Jersey. Since those early days, we have thanked God without ceasing that the magazine is still in circulation after sixty years. This has been made possible by dedicated believers down through the years who have faithfully underwritten the expenses, so that others might see the message that brought so much light and blessing to them. We also want to thank all those who continue to make it possible to send out the *Searchlight* to the ends of the earth.

The cosmetic changes to the magazine since 1940 have been minimal. Perhaps the most dramatic change came when we went to the two-column, four-color, glossy format. Everyone felt that this gave the magazine a more professional appearance. Of course, first impressions are lasting! If the front cover and inside pages are appealing to the eye, it is more likely the recipient will be inclined to read the contents. The message of the gospel contained within speaks for itself.

This past year we have experienced a number of large single digit and double digit increases in the cost of doing business. While our giving has remained steady we have not been keeping pace with the rising cost of goods and services. In order to offset these unforeseen expenses, we plan to implement a number of cost-cutting measures, beginning with the *Berean Searchlight*. By simply cutting the size of the magazine down to 5 ½" x 8 ½" it will save us approximately \$1,650 per month or \$18,150 yearly. The appearance of the *Searchlight*, with the two-column formatting, will remain the same.

Amazingly, we are told by the printer that we will be receiving four extra pages at no additional cost. This, of course, will compensate for the lines lost by the slightly smaller format and give us some added space to make known the riches of His grace. As you will note, we had to move the Mailbag pages to the back of the magazine so the four-color pages and the pages that need to "bleed" fell in the right areas.

I am sure you will agree that we are to be good stewards of the Lord's money. Therefore, we plan to implement other changes in the near future to help offset projected increases to the budget in the coming fiscal year. Thanks for your patience with us as we make these adjustments!

Yours in His service,
Paul M. Sadler, President

As the New Year Dawns

As another New Year dawns we do well to reflect upon two important passages of Scripture. The first is found in II Corinthians 6:2 where Paul, by the Spirit says:

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

We have no guarantee that the Lord Jesus will tarry another year, or even a month or a day. It is possible that within ten minutes after you have read this the dispensation of Grace will have been brought to a close, and the Lord will have come to catch away His own. Most of our readers, surely, will then be part of a blessed, happy throng. What about you? Will you be with us or will you be *left behind*? If you are not sure of your salvation, be wise and place your trust in Christ now.



“Yesterday’s past
You have only today.
Tomorrow may be too late.”

But the fact of the imminence of Christ’s return places a great responsibility upon believers too. How wrong of us to fritter away the time, when He may come so soon! How wrong to live for self! Let us rather heed the words of Paul to us who are saved:



“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

“Redeeming [buying up] the time, because the days are evil.

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15-17).

As one year dies and another is born,
A searching question’s due:
Have we lived up to the light we had?
Have we to Christ been true?

Or have we failed to do our part
To send His blessed Word
To those who stumble in the dark;
To those who have not heard?

Well, let us now forget the past,
Both failure and success,
And yield ourselves anew to God
To own and use and bless.

—Cornelius R. Stam

The Judgment Seat of Christ (Part II)

By Paul M. Sadler



“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

—I Corinthians 3:12,13

The poet, Friedrich Von Logau, said, “Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small.” William Wadsworth Longfellow elaborated and said, “Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small. Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness He grinds all.”¹ The judgments of God are like a fire sweeping across the floor of a pine forest—all consuming. Nothing will escape His eternal presence in the Day of Judgment. Although there have been many injustices in the household of God through the centuries, God has not forgotten. “He stands waiting, with exactness He grinds all.”

Paul begins, “Now if any man,” that is, any pastor, teacher, or evangelist, “build upon this foundation.” While these words are primarily

meant for those who hold positions of leadership within the Church, they also apply to every member of the Body of Christ. Consequently, *all* should take heed to the apostle’s admonition.

BUILDING ACCORDING TO GOD’S PLAN

Gold and Wood

Gold, silver, and precious stones represent our good works and faithful service. On the other hand, the wood, hay, and stubble represent those things that are done in the flesh, which are temporary in nature. Since Paul uses the metaphor of the *temple* in this context, we are given a hint as to the significance of these particular building materials. Paul assumes, of course, that we already understand what these materials symbolized in the Old Testament. Surely we can never do justice to this subject due to the endless line of thought that each of these images convey. So with God’s help, we offer the following for your consideration.

In the Old Testament *gold* symbolized deity. The furniture in both the tabernacle and the temple was overlaid with pure gold. When the priest entered the Holy Place, directly before him stood the golden altar of incense, where incense was burned, which portrayed the prayers of the saints ascending to God. This was an act of worship. On his right hand was the golden table of showbread, and on his left stood the golden

candlestick with six branches (Ex. 25:23,24,31,32; 30:1,3).

Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people; but not without blood. When he stepped behind the veil he stood in the very presence of God. As he sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat—located on top of the Ark of the Covenant—it should be noted that both were overlaid with gold. So then, gold is closely associated with the presence and worship of God (Ex. 25:10,11,17-19).

Today, our worship of God rests upon the revelation given to us by the Apostle Paul. Herein are the commands of Christ that we are responsible to obey. In so doing we are using gold in our construction. But what does God expect of us in regard to worship? Worship is simply service—it means to serve, pay homage. However you cannot serve God, or acceptably pay homage to Him, unless you have a knowledge of His will.

The primary *focus* of our worship must be the proclamation of the Word of God, with special emphasis laid upon rightly dividing the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15 cf. II Tim. 4:2). Of course, singing, prayer, giving, and testimonials should complement the preaching of the Word, but never infringe upon it in any way. In the administration of Grace, it is Paul who shows us how to worship. Hence, we must acknowledge his apostleship and message to build that which is lasting upon the foundation, which is Christ Jesus. This impacts every area of our worship.

For example, unlike Israel, we worship the God of all grace who's doing something new and different among the Gentiles. Unlike Israel, who had limited access to the throne of God, we have full access. Unlike Israel, who sought the forgiveness of her sins through atonement, we are forgiven on the basis of Christ's precious blood.

An outward expression of worshipping God is our giving. Under the law, God required His people to give ten percent of their earnings. This was known as the law of the tithe. Furthermore, the law was clear that their offerings and special donations were to be given in addition to the tithe. Today, we are to give from our heart as God has prospered us, which differs from person to person (I Cor. 16:1,2).

Everything connected to the tabernacle/temple spoke in some way of the person and work of Christ. As we know, the acacia *wood* used in the construction of the furniture in the temple was all overlaid with fine gold. The combination of wood, which symbolized humanity, and gold was significant because *both* typified Christ—He was wholly God and wholly human in one person (Ex. 25:10,11 cf. Isa. 53:2).

Wood, then, is closely associated with the flesh. As one of the building materials, it represents those things pleasing to *self*, and that which is done for appearance sake. Once again, worship is in view since wood and gold correspond to one another. But here we have a refusal on the part of the worshipper to fully acknowledge

Paul's gospel, for one reason or another. Many count the cost, and the cost is simply too high to stand in the defense and confirmation of Paul's message. They prefer to merely blend in with the mainstream of Christendom, where the music is plentiful and the experience gratifying. These "feel good ministries" thrive on emotionalism, but offer little in the way of substance from the Word of God.

"...we must again turn to Paul's epistles in order to present the correct terms of salvation...."

The motto of the Church today is, "Let me entertain you!" Shame on us! Surely we've lost our way, and sadly, the uniqueness of our message in the process. When a new family asks a pastor, "What does this church have to offer us?" it is obvious the Church has drifted far from its original purpose. The proper request should be, "Pastor, what can my family do to help further the cause of Christ?"

We have a life-changing message that's being smothered by compromise. The world is drunk with entertainment. It's quietly searching for answers to the eternal questions: Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? Where will I spend my eternal destiny? Think of it, we have the answers to these questions, and more! But the new philosophy of ministry has loftier goals. It says the Church must be more progressive

to meet the needs of the community. So while Christian leaders are busy planning the next church extravaganza to outdo the assembly down the street, lost souls are going to a Christless eternity.

Why do we insist upon grieving the heart of God!? We need to rededicate our pulpits and services to the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery. If we follow Paul's pattern, the Word of God will stir the hearts of the saints to do the work of the ministry. This is true worship in action! Remember and remember well, we must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Silver and Hay

Silver was another precious metal that was prominent throughout the tabernacle. All the sockets that supported this structure were made of silver. Inasmuch as these sockets were made from the redemption money given by the children of Israel to ransom their souls unto the Lord, it is clear silver speaks of redemption (Ex. 25:1-3; 30:11-16; 36:24; 38:27). It points to the redemptive work of Christ and the need to be saved.

With redemption now a reality, we are to tell a lost and dying world that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins unto them. So it is important that we are following the *correct* commission. Although many sincere believers are operating under the Great Commission, they are sincerely wrong. This commission, with its baptism of repentance for the remission of

sins, and signs, miracles and wonders, was given to Israel under the old economy. Today, we are to proclaim the commission of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-21).

So then, as we make known the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we must again turn to Paul's epistles in order to present the correct terms of salvation, which are: Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose again (I Cor. 15:1-4). The Bema Seat will declare if we had a burden for lost souls and faithfully shared the gospel of salvation with those around us. It will also be made manifest if we cared enough to follow-up with those we had the privilege of leading to Christ. In short, were we faithful to see that they became rooted and grounded in the truth of the unsearchable riches of Christ?

Hay is a temporal commodity. Since it stands opposite of silver, it represents those who have no interest whatsoever in the salvation of others. Here's a Christian who doesn't have a burden for lost souls. He's too busy for such things, or the fear of men has silenced him. He knows he should be witnessing for Christ and plans to get around to it someday, but the years pass like the flower of the field and his life ends misspent.

All too often the excuse is, "I'm not an evangelist, I leave such things to those who are more qualified!" This may be true, but every believer is responsible to do the work of the evangelist (II Tim. 4:5). You see, we have access to people and places the evangelist can only long for. Stop and think, when was the last time you prayed

for the Lord to give you *boldness* to witness to someone? When was the last time you were concerned about a loved one near to you that is in danger of eternal damnation? When was the last time you shared with someone the truth that God loves them and Christ died for their sins? Remember, the clock's ticking, not only for them, but for you as well!

Precious Stones and Stubble

Precious stones also bear a connection to the Old Testament temple. The High Priest was required to wear a breastplate when he ministered in the things of the Lord, which contained twelve precious stones (Ex. 28:15-29). Each stone represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel. They symbolized the glory of God. The breastplate was a constant reminder that the Lord's people were to be close to the heart of the High Priest as he faithfully ministered on their behalf, and also executed judgment. As a result, God was glorified among them.



When we come to Christ, we are saved by grace through faith alone apart from works. However, after we are saved by the grace of God, we are His workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus unto good works. According to Paul's gospel, we are the ministers of God today, and we are to glorify Him through good works. These include raising our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, volunteering our time at the Rescue Mission, given to hospitality, small acts of kindness, etc. It has been said, "Nobody is going to care how much you know, until they know how much you care."



Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of consecration. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others...to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom—I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory. We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table—'Here's my life, Lord, I'm giving it all.' But the reality for most of us is that He sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there in little acts of love in service for others. Usually, giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

Our motives and the intent of the heart also have a great bearing on our service for Christ. Allow me to illustrate: Pick one thing

you really enjoy doing in life—fishing, traveling, skiing, attending craft shows, etc. Once the date is set, you're probably like a sweet ant in a sugar bowl. The anticipation is more fun than a barrel of monkeys, and when the day finally arrives, you savor every moment. Now, do we approach the things of the Lord with the same enthusiasm, or do we serve Him out of necessity? If the members of the Body of Christ put half the effort into the Lord's work that a diehard Green Bay Packer football fan puts into a game at Lambeau Field, we'd make a lasting imprint on the world.

Stubble has little redeeming value. It's like the chaff that the wind sweeps away from the threshing floor. This is the believer who sows to the flesh. The pleasures and possessions of this world have crowded out any interest in serving the Lord. Like Demas, he has turned his back on the Lord's work, having loved this world. The loss this believer is going to suffer is immeasurable.

THAT DAY

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:13-15).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." God is going to bring forth every man's work for

a complete and thorough review. The apostle here is speaking of the body of a man's work that he produced over the course of his Christian life. We often say concerning someone who devoted his entire life to a particular cause, "this was his life's work." In other words, it was the sum total of all he accomplished. The same will be true of the believer, for "the day shall declare it." What day? The day of Christ when we must all appear before the Bema Seat.

"And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Fire is a symbol of the Word of God. Prior to the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah became very discouraged with the things of the Lord. So he packed his bags one day and essentially said to himself, "That's it, I've had it with this stiff necked people, I quit!" "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9).

With our marching orders for the Body of Christ found in Paul's epistles, we are going to be judged by the Word of God in light of his revelation. As our works are brought under the scrutiny of God's Word, there are going to be

"God is going to bring forth every man's work for a complete and thorough review."

two searching questions at that day: First, did we acknowledge Paul's apostleship and message to the Gentiles? Second, were we obedient to the commands of Christ taught in his writings? Of course, the Lord will judge the members of His Body on the basis of their faithfulness to the light they had in regard to the revelation of the Mystery. The Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, will distinguish what *s-o-r-t* of work it is. It is not a matter of the volume of work done, but what type—the issue is *quality*, not quantity.

Only those things that were done for Christ in relation to His heavenly ministry will be able to endure the intense scrutiny of the Word of God.

To Be Continued!



Endnote

1. *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, by Charles R. Swindoll, *W Publishing Group*, Nashville, Tennessee, Page 323.

The Preaching of the Word

"[He stands behind] the pulpit; he stands in Christ's stead; his message is the Word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him; the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue. What associations, and what vast responsibility!"

—Haddon W. Robinson

Should Persecution Arise

Encouragement for the Weak

By Cornelius R. Stam

How instructive are God's ways with His people!

Israel demands a king "like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5), so God gives them the most handsome, imposing man in Israel: Saul, the son of Kish, a full foot taller than anyone around him (I Sam. 9:2).

But—God allows the Philistines to challenge Israel in the person of Goliath, a giant still much taller than Saul. Saul is perhaps seven feet tall, but Goliath is nine! Day after day Goliath chides Israel: "Why should our armies fight each other? Why not send one man to do battle with *me*? If he wins, we will be your servants; if I win, you will be ours" (See I Sam. 17:8,9).

But the one to whom Israel's army looks for leadership, powerful, handsome King Saul, is no match for the pagan giant. Though the chosen representative of God and His people, Saul cowers in the background while Israel's armies fret and worry.

To break the stalemate and teach a much-needed lesson, God now sends to the scene a mere "stripling," David, the son of Jesse, a young lad with no training whatsoever in warfare. Upon arriving at the scene, the lad is indignant that this Philistine should be allowed to "defy the armies of the living God," and goes to Saul, declaring that he will fight the giant.

This is humiliating to Saul, the great king who was to have led

Israel in victorious battle against all her enemies. Under the circumstances, however, Saul is persuaded to let David face the giant, and provides him with a suit of armour (I Sam. 17:38), but feeling that the armour will prove a hindrance rather than a help, David declines to wear it. Armed only with a staff and a sling, he goes to a nearby brook and, choosing "five smooth stones," goes forth to meet the giant (Ver. 40).

There they stand, facing each other! The giant, nine feet tall, has a helmet of brass, a heavy coat of armour, a spear "like a weaver's beam" and a shield to protect himself, while little David has only a staff, a sling—and *God!* Result: God uses young David to bring the great Goliath down—and to show all that He, the God of Israel, is "mighty to save."

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him....And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled" (Vers. 50,51).

Thus God would teach us again the age-old lesson that since *He* is not impressed with human greatness, neither should we, His children, be overawed by it. Should persecution arise against God's people, even here in America, it will prove a great encouragement to us to remember that "*God hath chosen the weak things of the*

world to confound the things which are mighty...that no flesh should glory [boast] in His presence” (I Cor. 1:27-29).

How prone we are to forget this! Indeed, while searching among Jesse’s sons for a successor to Saul as Israel’s king, even the godly Samuel had looked at Jesse’s noble-looking firstborn and said: “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him” (I Sam. 16:6). But the Lord reproved Samuel, saying:

“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (Ver. 7).

And who was the Lord’s choice to succeed Saul as king of Israel? None other than Jesse’s *youngest* son, a mere lad, called a “stripling” by Saul, and overlooked and left out in the field as the other sons of Jesse were being considered for the position!

The Bible is full of this: God choosing “nobodies” to accomplish His work, while setting aside those who are acclaimed by all as “somebodies.”

This is both a warning and an encouragement to us. Those who are “great,” humanly speaking, may always be overcome by those who are still “greater,” while those who are nothing, but find their all in God, have help that cannot fail.

Question Box

“I’ve been told that it is possible to commit the unpardonable sin today. Since there was a time in my life that I blasphemed the Holy Spirit, did I lose my salvation?”

We have said it often and it bears repeating, while all Scriptures are for us, they are not all written to us, nor are they all about us. We must rightly divide the Word of truth to determine the will of God for the Church today. Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish between the two programs of God is to simply lift the Pauline epistles out of the canon of Scripture for a moment. Paul’s letters are written to us, the members of the Body of Christ. All other Scriptures follow the prophetic theme and present Israel as the centerpiece of God’s plans and purposes.

When our Lord gave the pronouncement regarding the unpardonable sin in Matthew 12:31,32, he was addressing Israel under the old economy. Since Paul’s revelation was yet a secret hidden in the mind of God, the warning does not apply to those living under this dispensation. According to Paul’s gospel, if you have trusted Christ as your personal Savior, you are *forgiven* in Him (Eph. 1:7) and beyond the reach of judgment:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

—Pastor Sadler

Our good friend, Ken Lawson, is currently serving as the pastor of the *Grace Memorial Church* located in Edinburg, Illinois. He also serves as the president of the *Midwest Grace Fellowship*, which is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. It is quite common to carry some of the baggage of Denominationalism with us into the Grace Movement when we come to see Paul's gospel. Therefore we sometimes need to be reminded how important it is to remain consistent with the Word, rightly divided. With this in mind, we're sure you're going to benefit from Brother Ken's insights on the subject of the confession of sins.

—Ed.

The Confession of Sins

(Is 1 John 1:9 a part of God's will for the present Dispensation of Grace?)

By Pastor Ken Lawson

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Guilt is a killer. A killer of our joy, our peace, our enjoyment of intimacy with God. It is one of Satan's most effective weapons against the sons of men. Psychiatrists and doctors tell us that unresolved guilt is the number one cause of mental illness and suicide. Over half of all hospital beds are filled by people who have emotional illnesses. Guilt kills relationships, both among people and with God. We cannot freely forgive others until we first receive that forgiveness from God.



Our gracious and loving Father has provided a full and complete deliverance from sin and guilt. But if we believe a lie and fail to deal with guilt in the way God *has dealt* with it, we fall into a snare and it becomes a most grievous and cruel weapon against us.

Guilt is that moral sense of blameworthiness that each of us feels when we know that we have done wrong. It is not necessarily bad, for it tells us that we have sinned and that something must be done about it. Just as our bodies should hurt when they are diseased or injured, so our God-given conscience should hurt when we violate what we know is right.

At the beginning, we must realize that God has not dealt with the guilt problem in the same way throughout Bible history. This is of utmost importance to know, for so many of the problems regarding guilt are made worse by people trying to obey God's commands given to people of other dispensations. For example, under the law of Moses,

the children of Israel were commanded to “afflict your souls” as the high priest made atonement for their sins through animal sacrifice (Lev. 16:29-31). The writer of Hebrews elaborates on this Day of Atonement and the inability of the law to provide complete forgiveness.

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

“For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

“But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4).

Although this was a merciful provision in Israel for the time then present, the law was inadequate to make the worshippers perfect in conscience in relation to the guilt problem. The very fact that the sacrifices had to be repeated was a constant reminder that God’s forgiveness was given out piecemeal, i.e., on an installment plan. It was never completed. God’s people were expected to lament and afflict their souls, which is the antithesis of a perfected conscience. Indeed, far from being a satisfactory answer for guilt, Paul tells us in no uncertain terms why the law was given.

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that *every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*” (Rom. 3:19).

God graciously provided the sacrificial system of the law to temporarily atone (cover) the sins of his people until the “precious blood of Christ” could be shed to purchase eternal redemption for us. Those living before the Cross were “saved on credit,” so to speak, until the fullness of time arrived for the complete removal of our sins. Even in portions of what we call the New Testament, forgiveness was conditional and therefore not complete (Matt. 6:12,14,15; 18:34,35; Mark 11:25,26; Luke 6:37c). The revelation of the Mystery through the Apostle Paul by the ascended, glorified Christ was yet future from the perspective of Matthew-John. And so the capstone of divine revelation concerning the total forgiveness of sins remained missing until that time. All of this is essential to understand throughout the remainder of our study.

With this in mind, there is one Scripture which in this writer’s view has caused untold harm and detriment to the people of God. Not because the verse itself is faulty, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, but because religious leaders have so miserably misinterpreted and misapplied its original intent. What makes this all the more tragic is that it comes not from the enemies of Christ but from sincere, well respected, Bible-believing Christians. The verse I speak of is 1 John 1:9.

In order to view the verse within its context, I ask you simply to prayerfully consider the following passage from 1 John 1:1-10.

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5. This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

6. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

7. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

Are you confident that you understand verse 9 in context? Let us see. Although men have many variations of interpretation on this verse, we will mention here only three of the most popular.

1. It is a salvation verse which tells the sinner how to receive the forgiveness of sins today.
2. It is a restoration verse.
 - a. Restoring one to salvation or,
 - b. Restoring one to fellowship
3. It is a verse pertaining to the Jews under the Kingdom program of Prophecy and has little if any application to the Gentiles today under the Body of Christ program of the Mystery.

For the time being, I would like to pass over numbers 1 and 3 and deal directly with number 2. The other two will take care of themselves as we come to understand the passage. Part 2-a is the most easily answered. This is the view that a saved person can become lost again through backsliding, carnality, losing faith, etc.

Often a person is told that his sins are forgiven up to the time he is saved. From that point forward the merits of Christ's death are beneficial to him only as he is faithful to confess his sins to God and thus stay cleansed in His sight.

First of all, regeneration or the new birth is spoken of as a one time experience. No Bible passage speaks of being born again and again and again. During my college years, I attended a tent meeting for three nights with some friends. I couldn't help noticing that the same people went forward each night after the sermon to receive forgiveness. One night the evangelist quoted 1 John 1:9 and made the statement that no one with unconfessed sin will enter heaven. When I pressed him about this after the meeting, he finally conceded that John probably meant the grosser forms of sin. This underscores another problem with this view. How many sins did God allow Adam and Eve before they were cast out from His presence in the garden of Eden? Only one. And all they did was eat a piece of fruit that the Lord told them not to. How many unforgiven sins do you suppose it will take to banish you to the everlasting burnings? Only one. God is holy and of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. If your forgiveness depends on your confession of sins, you better be diligent not to forget even one.

The second reason 1 John 1:9 cannot refer to a restoration to salvation is that eternal life is a free gift. It is given by God's grace not merely to the undeserving, but to those who deserve the exact opposite. If God rescinded His gift, that would make Him more gracious to His enemies than to His own children. God does not take back the gift if you become unworthy. We were never worthy to begin with.

Thirdly, God wishes for us to enjoy the gift of salvation. Salvation is of the Lord. Man's only responsibility is to believe. Does God want us to walk through our Christian lives with a cloud over our heads? Those who believe that their forgiveness depends on their continual confession of sins soon find that their Christian experience has turned into "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

The Scriptures tell us that upon believing that the Lord Jesus died for us and rose again we are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 1:13,14; Rom. 8:31-38). With the gospel of the grace of God, we have the pleasure of declaring the total forgiveness of sins. This brings peace, joy, and stability. More about this later.



Rock of Gibraltar

Number 2-b above also speaks of restoration, not to salvation or even to maintain it, but rather to fellowship. Those who hold this view understand clearly the teaching of eternal security and the preservation of the saints. The issue this time is intimacy with their heavenly Father. Our **relationship** is like the Rock of Gibraltar, steadfast and immovable. On the other hand, our *fellowship* (we are told) is like a tiny thread which the slightest sin in thought, word, or deed

can break. Perhaps the best illustration of this view is the fellowship between a father and son. If the son sins against his father, the intimacy formerly enjoyed by both is broken and the pleasure of each other's company is strained. The blood relationship of father and son remains intact, but the fellowship must be restored by confession of wrongdoing. Likewise, Christians have a blood relationship to our heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ. While nothing can break our relationship as sons of God, fellowship can only be restored by acknowledging the sin and an apology made, preferably with a pledge not to repeat the offense. This re-establishes the sweetness of fellowship and the pleasure with which both Father and son can relate to each other.



Believers who seek to practice this often speak of “keeping short accounts with God,” that is, making sure you confess sins regularly so your account does not build up with unconfessed sin. Psalms 32, 51, and John 13:1-20 are often quoted to confirm this position.

This view of 1 John 1:9 has more to commend it than the previous one. “Confession is good for the soul” is a truism which holds good for all ages and dispensations. Indeed, Proverbs 28:13 says,

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth¹ and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

In my formative years as a Christian, this view seemed to me to be logical, balanced and right. I knew many respected Bible teachers who taught this. Through the years, however, I believe the Spirit of God was pricking my conscience to show me things which revealed the shortcomings of this approach. Among them were:

1. It is based on a performance system of conditional blessing, and shifted my gaze away from Christ and His grace to my own faithfulness (or usually failure) to confess.

2. If what I believed concerning confession was true, I was probably “out of fellowship” much of the time, and so were most believers.

3. There were many things in 1 John Chapter 1 which are inconsistent with this view.

4. Concerning the popular father-son illustration, several rhetorical questions could be asked to show its weakness. What if the son fails to confess wrongdoing? Should the father continue to show him the cold shoulder until he does? What kind of father would that make him? Would this be a fitting picture of how our loving heavenly Father deals with His children today under grace? Further, the phrase “faithful and just” more aptly describes the judge in a courtroom than a father in the family room.

5. I had to honestly admit to myself that I found it extremely difficult to confess all my daily sins on a consistent basis.

6. This view of 1 John 1:9 must, of necessity, occupy a major plank in a person's belief system. Without regular confession of sin, the promise of continual cleansing is rendered null and void resulting in broken fellowship. And who wants to be out of fellowship with God?

7. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, is silent in all his writings on confession of sins for forgiveness, parental or otherwise.

8. Paul's epistles give us a positive affirmation of total, complete and unconditional forgiveness for all those in Christ Jesus.

A few examples should suffice,

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

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

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

Forgiveness for the believer is now spoken of as a finished transaction, past history. We do not plead for daily forgiveness any more than we should for daily redemption. It is a part of the "all spiritual blessings" with which we have already been blessed (Eph. 1:3). For further references to Paul's doctrine of forgiveness for the present dispensation of the grace of God, consult the following Scriptures: Colossians 1:14; 3:13; Romans 4:5-8; Acts 13:38,39.

It is duly manifest that we must find a better explanation of 1 John 1:9. A good place to begin in the context of the passage is verse 6.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

The key question is this. Are those who "walk in darkness" believers or unbelievers? How we answer this question is absolutely critical to the interpretation of this passage. If they are carnal, disobedient, backslidden believers who are walking in darkness, they are lying about having fellowship with God. A confession of sin in their life and "walking in the light" will restore the fellowship. However, if it can be proved from Scripture that they are unbelievers who were falsely professing fellowship, the "out of fellowship" position falls apart, for no one could successfully argue a restoration to something which they never had.

In order to see which it is, please compare the following three Scriptures.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6).

"But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11).

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

Note carefully the relationship of these verses to each other and what they teach.

1. He that hates his brother² “walks in darkness.”
2. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer.
3. No murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Conclusion: He who walks in darkness does not have eternal life abiding in him, i.e. an unbeliever.

Once this is clearly perceived by the reader, the restoration to fellowship theory comes crashing down like a house of cards. Remove all doubt from your mind. A concordant study of Scripture reveals that the consistent, uniform appellation to darkness, whether it be the Word of God in general or to John’s writings in particular, refers to the unsaved (John 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35,36,46; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4,6; 6:14; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Thes. 5:4,5; 1 Pet. 2:9).

“We do not plead for daily forgiveness any more than we should for daily redemption.”

I can just hear some reader object, “Wait a minute, Brother Ken! What about the man living in immorality in 1 Corinthians Chapter 5? What about the Galatian believers who were ‘removed from Him that called [them] into the grace of Christ unto another gospel’ (Gal. 1:6)? And how about Peter, when

he had to be rebuked by Paul for his hypocrisy among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14)? Couldn’t it be said that they were ‘walking in darkness?’” Absolutely not. It will help the reader to understand that John does not address *how* they walk but *where* they walk. It is their abiding position in Christ. All unbelievers have their position outside of Christ and are thus walking in darkness. All believers in Christ, whether in the Kingdom program or the Body of Christ, have their position in Him and are walking in the light. A believer cannot walk in darkness any more than an unbeliever can walk in the light.³

With this in mind, the benefits of understanding the next verse becomes immediately apparent.

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Notice the conditional nature of this promise. The cleansing of the blood depends upon our walking in the light. Indeed, all five verses of this section begin with an “if.” It is a test of spiritual reality (verses 6-10). For years I had a great deal of confusion of mind about this. I read it as though it said, “If we walk *according to* the light, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” I thought it meant that if I was very careful to obey God’s commands and walk according to the light I had, He would cleanse me, which was just another way of saying that I was cleansed when I did not need cleansing.

However, when the verse is understood aright, we find that the vilest sinner may have this cleansing when he comes into the light of God through faith in Jesus Christ. It does *not* say, “If we walk *according to light*,” but it says, “If we walk *in the light*.” Again, it is where we walk, not how we walk. It is to walk in the presence of God as an abiding position.

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. We have not mentioned the Roman Catholic tradition of confession to a priest, but one verse from Paul should suffice to show the error of this custom. “For there is...one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).
2. Take note that the word “brother” in the passage does *not* indicate that the one doing the hating is a believing brother. Rather the racial relationship of the Jewish brotherhood is described as in Romans 9:3. Although they were kinsmen according to the flesh, nothing is clearer in John’s writings than that a Jew who believes in Jesus Christ should be prepared to endure the wrath and hatred of his unbelieving brothers in Israel.
3. That is why sin in a believer’s life is so serious. When a believer sins, he is doing it “in the light.” A preacher once delivered a sermon on, “The sins of the saints.” Afterwards, a woman reproached him saying, “But pastor, the sins of believers are not the same as the sins of the heathen!” “Yes,” the pastor replied, “they are much worse!”

If you would like more information about *Midwest Grace Fellowship*, or if you have a question or comment on the above article, Pastor Lawson can be reached at: *Midwest Grace Fellowship*, P.O. Box 14203, Kansas City, MO 64152.

Forgiveness

When the books of a certain Scottish doctor were examined after his death, it was found that a number of accounts were crossed out with a note: “Forgiven—too poor to pay.” But the physician’s wife later decided that these accounts must be paid in full and she proceeded to sue for the money. When the case came to court the judge asked one question: “Is this your husband’s handwriting?” When she replied that it was he responded: “There is no court in the land that can obtain a debt once the word *forgiven* has been written.”

And that is the good news that the Gospel offers us. God’s attitude is not, “I’ll forgive but I won’t forget,” but rather, “Forgiven, Forgotten Forever.” Across our debt has been written the words, “Forgiven—too poor to pay.” Once a debt has been cancelled there is no one who can collect on it. God wipes it out of His mind. Oh, if we could only do that. If we could forgive others like that!

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

—Selected

The Seasons of Our Life

Dear Friends in Christ,

What is God's will for me? This is a question that all of us have asked at one time or another. Does God have a plan for our children? How about our teenagers? How does God want us to look for a marriage partner? As parents, what is our role, and what should "retired" saints be doing?

The Word of God covers all the "Seasons of Our Life." We simply need to look to God's Word for His wisdom. Pastor Joel Finck is well known for his pro-family stance, and we are looking forward to having him with us for our *Spring Bible Conference*. This is a conference that both young and older saints will find enjoyable and will want to attend. Single, married, "empty" or "fully" nested, please plan on heading to Orlando in February 2003.

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as they break the Bread of Life!***

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By C. R. Stam

It is interesting, indeed, to note how many profound doctrines are discussed in *II Corinthians*, in contrast to all the rebukes, corrections, instructions, etc., found in *I Corinthians*. Two of the greatest of these are, perhaps, the New Covenant and the doctrine of reconciliation.

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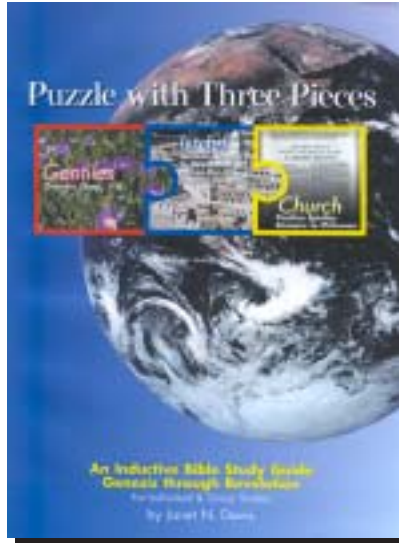
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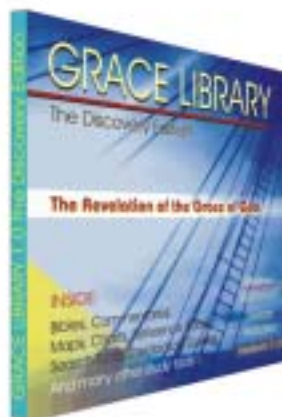
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What Was Paul's Office?

Romans 11:13

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Rom. 11:13).

Paul's declaration that he magnified his office, or ministry, should cause us to ask, “What is Paul's office?”

In answer to that question, we read in I Corinthians 1:1 that Paul “*was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.*” We see then that Paul held the position, or “office,” of an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word apostle means one who is set apart as a “special delegate” or “ambassador.” So we can say that Paul was particularly set apart, or commissioned, by God as a **special envoy of Jesus Christ.**

Romans 11:13 states that Paul was not just an apostle, but was specifically the Apostle to the Gentiles, or nations. This is a very important distinction. In

Galatians 2:9, we read that, having come to an understanding of the grace given to Paul, James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who represented the twelve apostles chosen by Christ during His earthly ministry, limited their ministry to the circumcision (Hebrews) while Paul was to go to the Gentiles. This was nothing less than an acknowledgment that Paul's God-given office was distinctly different than that given to Peter and the eleven.

If God's specially chosen and commissioned Apostle to the Gentiles magnifies his office (not himself but his God-given position) and Christ's other apostles acknowledge the authority of his God-given ministry, shouldn't we, as Gentiles, take a serious look at what he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? After all, the Bible, God's own Word, declares that as Gentiles, *he is our apostle.*

Don't Forget! Fall Semester begins January 27, 2003!

For an application or more information about *Berean Bible Institute*, please contact: Dr. W. Edward Bedore, PO Box 40, Germantown, WI 53022 or phone: (262) 255-4094, fax: (262) 255-4195, e-mail: <berean@execpc.com>.

**“Only one life; 'twill soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.”**

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS! The *Community Bible Church* of Lena, Wisconsin has called Wes (and Debbie) Bardeck to be their pastor, as of September 22, 2002. Sunday School starts at 9:30 a.m. followed by the Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. The assembly is located at 7530 Highway 141, Lena, WI 54139. For further information, please contact Pastor Bardeck at: (920) 829-6385. God's very best, Wes, as you break the Bread of Life among these dear saints.

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES: Although our dear Brother Rollin Wilson was promoted to glory in May 2002, the courses he had finished writing for *Distance Bible Studies* will be edited and published. The course on "James and Philippians" is now available. Other courses available are Genesis & Romans, and Matthew & Ephesians. Each course can be purchased for \$20.00 from *Distance Bible Studies*, P.O. Box 97, Altoona, Wisconsin 54720.

NEW ASSEMBLY: For the past 25 years or so Grace works have been few and far between out east. So, we are pleased to announce the formation of a new Grace Church in Newington, Connecticut. The *Harvest Bible Church* is now holding services every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. For directions or additional information, please contact: Pastor Rodney Beaulieu at: 1-860-827-0866 or e-mail: <rhmeh777@aol.com>. Warmest regards to these dear brethren as they seek to make all men see what is the fellowship of the Mystery.

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE: This past year we have been accepting *MasterCard* and *Visa* for all book and tape orders. If you have access, the fastest way to place an order is via the Internet. To save time, you can also include a donation when you place an order. Our website address is found on the inside front cover of the *Berean Searchlight* every month.



*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was taken by Judy Petras of Denver, Colorado. The *Point Robinson Lighthouse* is located on the easternmost point of Maury Island, Washington, in the southeastern Puget Sound. The area where it was built is a turning point for ships sailing between Seattle and Tacoma. This area is often shrouded in fog, and sailors refer to this point as the "Fog Net." The lighthouse is 38-feet high and its light can be seen for 12 miles.

From Ohio:

"I was in a Christian thrift shop yesterday and ran across several copies of the *Berean Searchlight*. The thing that I noticed right away was *Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided*. I became familiar with right division about two years ago when I met up with a pastor from my area who teaches right division. It is wonderful—I had always thought that Scripture contradicted itself, but through right division, am learning so much more than ever before. Is it possible to get a subscription? I would love to receive it on a regular basis. Please let me know what the cost is. I would like to get started ASAP."

From Oklahoma:

"The *Searchlight* and books by Pastors Stam and Sadler have greatly helped me in the faith...I have been studying the Mystery for about a year now and have been trying to help others see it. There is so much erroneous teaching going on around here. It is hard to challenge doctrine when none is taught!"

From South Dakota:

"Thank you so much for your ministry unto the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm growing in the study of the Word, rightly divided. Within the last two years, Brother Sadler's studies in Peter's Epistles have been in my devotional times on a regular basis. I'd encourage Pastor Sadler to teach through Hebrews." (I've often said that Hebrews is one of the last great frontiers to be explored—we're working on it! Ed.)

From Idaho:

"I read your *Searchlight* today, and I will begin to provide support to your ministry. In these times, it may not be large, but I desire to help you continue on."

From Switzerland:

"This past Friday I received the books I had ordered from BBS. The box was a bit beat up on the outside, but the books inside are in fine shape, having been packaged very well. Please tell the dear brothers and sisters at the shipping department a great thank you from me. These books are precious and I thank God for you and all those who are a part of the BBS ministry. As the world is getting ever more entangled in a web of deception, it is good to have yet towers of light shining into the darkness." (Bunny hovers over every package like a mother hen to insure the contents arrive undamaged inside. Needless to say, you need layers of protection to navigate the perils of the US Postal Service. Thanks again to the mailroom for a job well done! Ed.)

From Ontario:

"I'm presently studying the Romans Commentary by Pastor Stam. I'm enjoying it immensely."

From the Internet:

"I was the most zealous legalist, unwittingly preaching 'works' for salvation, until I was confronted with the doctrine of grace according to the letters of Paul. After my conversion, I am a soul winner and a Bible teacher, rightly dividing the Word of truth regarding the gospel of the grace of God."

From Pennsylvania:

"I have recently come in contact with a new believer. She is seeking to learn more in God's Word and desires a deeper relationship with the Lord. My fear is that she does not understand how to rightly divide God's Word. I am praying that I will be used to help her and am writing to request that she be included on your mailing list in hopes that she can use the *Berean Searchlight* as an aid."

From Illinois:

“I was blessed with an opportunity for a brief period to read part of your book, *Things That Differ*. I found it to be most interesting. Unfortunately, the person who owned the book had to be transferred. I haven’t had the chance to read it entirely. Is there any way you could send me one of your books?”

From the Internet:

“I have been a Christian for just over a year. I am 17 years old now, soon to be 18. My step-dad showed me an issue of your magazine. I loved it. I have been wondering how to receive a copy of it for myself. If you could please assist me in however you could, I would be very happy and thankful! Thank you!” (It’s great to see more and more of our young people showing an interest in spiritual things. Ed.)

From New York:

“I am praising the Lord for the way He has blessed me through your ministry. I just received the booklets and one extra on *Trials and Temptations* which were written by Paul Sadler. I can’t begin to tell you how much I have been truly blessed through it. I enjoyed that so much and I am so glad after reading it that I would like to hug Pastor Sadler. You will never know how much that meant to me at 81 years. I especially appreciated the story of the grandmother’s recipe—what a beautiful truth.”

From Michigan:

“First, let me thank Pastor Sadler for being with us for our *Family Bible Conference* a couple of weeks ago. It was a great blessing...in the word and fellowship! Thank you, Pastor, for your ministry to our church family and friends.”

From Florida:

“With the help of you at BBS and other brethren who have stood uncompromisingly for the distinctive Pauline message, my relationship with God is growing as is my knowledge of His Word. I thank you for your faithfulness in serving our Lord Jesus and I am very much looking forward to hearing from you in the future.”

From Illinois:

“I thank God for BBS; you have opened my eyes to the truth.”

From the Philippines:

“Thank you for the FOUR boxes received in Mbags...the pastors love to get these! Have enjoyed perusing the 50th Anniversary book I picked up at the BBF conference...the Lord has really blessed! SIX packets of *Searchlights* came right after we returned... they are ready to send out. Everyone is so excited to see the article with pictures from the RP.” (We have many fond memories of our visit to the Philippines that we’ll cherish for many years to come. Thanks, Brother Anderson, for your faithful service among the Filipino people—I know they are eternally grateful for your labor of love. Ed.)

From Norway:

“I am a Norwegian teacher and author. I have written 13 books about Israel, the Middle East, the End Times, and the return of Yeshuah and the Jewish roots of Christianity. I have all the books and booklets of Stam and Sadler. I hold your view on many issues.”

From Alabama:

“Great website! Thank you for giving me a new light in which to study God’s Word.”

“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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