

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

May 2007



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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:



Dearly Beloved,

Every morning as I sit on the edge of the bed, waiting for full consciousness to be restored before standing up, I thank the Lord for another *day of grace*. I have long been grateful for the day that *grace* reached down and touched my life. Since then I have devoted my entire life, with God's help, to the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God.

To those who have an understanding of the Word, rightly divided, it is evident that the world is headed straight for the day of the Lord. The coming Tribulation, foretold by the prophet Daniel, ominously looms on the horizon like an approaching category 5 hurricane. You can even sense the rising tensions in the world that will contribute to the climactic events about to unfold. The only thing withholding the evil one's plan to bring the world to a state of complete chaos and lawlessness is the Church, the Body of Christ. With opposition to the Christian faith sure to intensify near the close of the day of grace, it is all the more reason to redeem the time in the evil day in which we live.

While we await the sound of the trumpet to be removed from this doomed world, we are to be "abounding in the work of the Lord." May we suggest a number of ways this might be accomplished in our day-to-day lives? Begin enclosing gospel tracts in all of your mailings, and invite other believers to visit the *Berean Bible Society's* website, where they can be introduced to Paul's apostleship and message. There are literally hundreds of articles that are relative to the Word of God from which to choose. Amazingly, we have been receiving over 1,000 visits per day to the site, for which we are most grateful—our web address is www.bereanbiblesociety.org.

To assist you further in your desire to abound in the work of the Lord we are offering *Things That Differ* (PB), *Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, and *Now That I Believe* as a set for the **Special Price of \$12.00**. That's over *half off* the regular price! You can either give these works out individually or as a gift set to a friend or loved one who's searching for the truth—orders up to \$20.00, please add \$3.00 for postage and handling; orders over \$20.00, please add 15% for postage and handling. This offer ends May 31st!

With the day of grace casting a longer and longer shadow, the hour is growing late, but thankfully there is still time to carry out the commission of reconciliation. Until the Lord returns for His Church, may we faithfully serve Him who called us into His grace.

Serving and waiting,

Paul M. Sadler, President

The Sovereign Handiwork of God

By Paul M. Sadler



The word “trinity” is not found in the Scriptures, but there is a clear line of teaching on the subject threaded throughout the Word of God. We believe there is one God who eternally exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14). With this in mind, the Lord has stamped His creation with trinities to the praise of His glory.

THE GLORY OF CREATION

Space	Time	Matter
Length Width Height	Past Present Future	Energy Motion Phenomena

Phenomena are the results of energy and motion—color, sound, hardness, etc. Notice how wonderfully the creation is woven together. If any one of the above nine factors were to be removed the entire system would collapse. Interestingly, the trinity of the universe extends both vertically and horizontally.

THE GLORY OF MAN

In the beginning God created man in His own image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26,27). In the Hebrew, *image* has the idea of resemblance. Man resembles God in the following ways.

Trichotomous Being	Likeness	Personality
Body Soul Spirit	Spiritual Moral Social	Intellect Emotions Will

The Lord has created man a *spiritual* being. “In Him [Christ] was life; and the life was the light of men.” Today, when we respond to the gospel, in Christ, we have life and life more abundantly (Rom. 6:23). God is a moral being; therefore, He is eternally righteous. While Adam was given a mutable righteousness for the purpose of testing, we receive the righteousness of Christ when we place our faith in His finished work. In eternity past, the members of the Godhead enjoyed a perfect fellowship one with another. Being created in His likeness we, too, enjoy fellowship with Him and with those of like-precious faith (Phil. 1:3-6).

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 2:1-8

By Paul M. Sadler

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

—Phil. 2:1,2

CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

As we have seen, Paul was keenly aware that Satan was actively attempting to produce the “perfect storm” at Philippi from either within or without the assembly. Since internal *strife* is usually the most effective tool of Satan, the apostle seeks to defuse the tension among them by appealing to four truths they knew but had lost sight of in the passion of their discussions.

Paul introduces these four truths with “if” clauses. In the English, we primarily use the term “if” as a supposition, which often contains an element of doubt. For example, “*If* the weather holds out

they will be here on time.” In the original language, however, Paul’s four “if” clauses assume that what is being made reference to is *true*. “*If* there be therefore any consolation in Christ,” and *there is*, then the Philippians should respond accordingly.

First, Paul reminds them in regard to their “consolation in Christ” that the Lord had come alongside of them on more than one occasion to encourage and strengthen them. Like a building that rests on its foundation, Christ *supports* His own. Paul is a good example. You will recall that when the apostle had gone to Jerusalem to try to reach his countrymen for Christ, he nearly lost his life and ended up in prison. Discouraged and wondering what to do next, the Lord appeared to him and said: “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11). The Lord had extended the same grace

to the Philippians through His Word.

Secondly, they had experienced the “comfort of love” (Gr. *agape*). These brethren understood that they were the sinners for whom Christ died. They were consoled by the love of God for they had been saved from the hellfire judgment to come. It hadn’t been that long ago that the love of Christ was the motivating influence in their lives, not to live selfishly, but for Him who died for their sins and rose again (II Cor. 5:14,15). Paul is careful to call this to the attention of those in the assembly who were bent on defending themselves at any cost.

Thirdly, others within the church had lost sight of the “fellowship of the Spirit” they once enjoyed. You see, yielding to the Spirit of God always produces *oneness*. But if they were trying to defend an agenda, as some are prone to do in the local assembly, it had probably strained their relationship with one another to the degree that they weren’t communicating any longer. Paul calls to their remembrance here that they were members of one another and had been made to drink of the *same* Spirit. In other words, they *all* enjoyed the gift of eternal life imparted to them by the Spirit of God, and were *all* indwelt by that same Spirit. They simply needed to yield to the Spirit by making a practical application of this truth in their lives, so their fellowship with one another could be restored (I Cor. 12:13).

Fourth, one of the characteristics when carnality begins to creep in among believers is

self-centeredness. Sadly those who fall into this lifestyle become caught up in themselves—their needs, their concerns, their desires, etc. Apparently this is exactly what happened at Philippi, which prompted the apostle to say, if there be “any bowels [affections] and mercies, fulfill ye my joy.” Essentially Paul is asking them, “What happened to your love for one another?” They used to look out for each other, but now they were so self-absorbed they had become insensitive and unkind. The apostle had to remind them, as he had done with the saints at Rome, to “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

We might sum up Paul’s four-fold challenge to the Philippians in this way: If you have found the Lord’s concern and support to be an encouragement, if the love of Christ has motivated you to live for Him, if you’ve enjoyed the communion of the Spirit with those of like-precious faith, and if you truly love me and the brethren; then demonstrate your appreciation by fulfilling “my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2).

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT 101

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1,2).

Interestingly, verses one and two answer each other. “If there be therefore any *consolation in Christ...fulfill ye my joy.*” The Philippians had a relationship with Christ; consequently, they were inseparably bound to Him. If this was true, and it was, then they should be *likeminded* seeing that they were all one in Him. If there be therefore any “*comfort of love...fulfill ye my joy.*” This answers “having the *same love*” to make known the riches of His grace. If there be therefore “any *fellowship of the Spirit...fulfill ye my joy*” points to Paul’s desire for them to be of “*one accord.*” They were to walk in the Spirit, but two cannot walk together unless they are in agreement. A. T. Robertson once said that believers should be “like clocks that strike at the same moment.” Finally, if there be therefore “*any bowels [affections] and mercies...fulfill ye my joy*” answers to be of “*one mind,*” which has the idea of having a common goal in showing kindness toward one another and to those who are yet outside of Christ. For example:

“Watchman Nee, the Chinese evangelist, tells of a Christian he once knew in China. He was a poor rice farmer, and his fields lay high on a mountain. Every day he pumped water into the paddies of new rice. And every morning he returned to find that an unbelieving neighbor who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the Christian’s field to let the water fill his own. For a while the Christian ignored the injustice, but at last he became desperate. What should he do?



His own rice would die if this continued. How long could it go on? The Christians met, prayed, and came up with a solution. The next day the Christian farmer rose early in the morning and first filled his neighbor’s fields; then he attended to his own. Watchman Nee tells how the neighbor subsequently became a Christian, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of a Christian’s love for others.”¹

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:3-5).

Clearly Paul’s use of the term “strife” here is an indication that there were those at Philippi who were electioneering to hold some

of the more prominent positions within the assembly. In short, they were *ambitious*, which in its negative connotation is never a good thing in the Lord's work. Such an ambitious man is out to get ahead at any cost. Usually his motto in life is: The end justifies the means! He wants to be the brightest light in the room and he will not be satisfied until he outshines everyone else, even if it means leaving a few devastated colleagues in his wake.

When the above matter came to Paul's attention, he was alarmed. While this is something we would expect to see in the world, it should *never* be true of the Lord's people. Therefore, the apostle takes dead aim at those who were guilty of trying to get ahead at the expense of others, when he says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory," which is an improper attitude for a believer in Christ. Rather, these brethren were to humble themselves before God and "esteem other better than themselves." They were not to look "every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." You see, Paul desired that they have the attitude of Christ, who didn't think of Himself, but had the well-being of others always before Him. As a result, He left heaven's glory on our behalf and in condescending love "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

THE INCARNATION

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no

reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).

We have before us one of the most majestic narratives on the person and work of Christ found in the Word of God. This is holy ground that in many respects goes far beyond our comprehension; nonetheless, we pray God will use our feeble efforts to do justice to the passages that are before us. First and foremost, we believe Jesus Christ is God. The Deity of Christ is carefully woven throughout the Scriptures from beginning to end.

When Paul said to the believers at Philippi to "let this mind [attitude] be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" he was teaching them a lesson in *humility*. Christ, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The phrase the "form of God" used here by the apostle is not a reference to the outward appearance of the sovereign One of the universe, for we know God is a Spirit (John 4:24). It is true that God in the person of Christ did appear at times in a human form known as a theophany. Theophanies were *temporary* physical appearances or visions of God to make known His will (Gen. 18:1-33). John tells us, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him [theophanies]" (John 1:18). Once again, it is important to remember that God is a Spirit.

W. E. Vine states regarding the phrase “being in the form of God,” that the term “form” Gr. *morphe* “denotes the special or characteristic form or feature of a person or thing.” In this context, it is *not* speaking about the outward appearance of God, but rather the outward expression of the *inward nature* or His essence. Thus, Paul is careful to establish that Christ has the very nature of God because He is God—coequal and coeternal. He adds that Christ “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Another key word in this passage is “robbery” (Gr. *harpagmos*), which, according to Thayer, has the idea of “a thing to be seized upon or to be held fast, retained.” In other words, as God, Christ “did not regard His being on an equality of glory and majesty with God as a prize and a treasure to be held fast, but emptied Himself thereof.”²²

“...Paul desired that they have the attitude of Christ, who didn't think of Himself...”

“But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

When Christ stepped across the stars into this sinful world He “made Himself of no reputation [Gr. *Kenoo*],” that is, He *emptied* Himself. We want to be clear here: He **did not** empty Himself of His Deity. Rather, He emptied

Himself of the outward manifestation of His attributes and glory, that He might achieve the great work of redemption on our behalf. In the incarnation, Christ “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” During the years that He lived and dwelt among us He was wholly God and wholly man, having both a human and divine nature in one person. While we cannot fully grasp this, much less explain it adequately, nevertheless, this is the true testimony of the Scriptures, which we accept by faith.

When Christ took on the “form” (Gr. *morphe*) or *nature* of a servant, He was “made in the likeness of men,” with one exception: He was without sin that He may be our sin-bearer. Christ intentionally veiled His divine attributes and glory with a perfect human body that He might partake of the human experience. If you were to have passed the Lord on one of the streets of Jerusalem, you would have never known He was the Son of God, until He spoke! With this in mind, there were times however, that Christ *purposely* allowed those to whom He was ministering to see glimpses of His divine attributes and glory, that all the household of faith might know He was God manifested in the flesh.

What have been called the non-moral attributes of God in theology—omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence—are all clearly witnessed during Christ's earthly ministry.

Omniscience simply means that God is all-knowing. In addition to

knowing Himself, He knows all things past, present, and future. His knowledge is infinite (Psa. 147:5), as clearly seen in Christ's interaction with Nathanael and the Scribes and Pharisees.

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God” (John 1:47-49). See also John 4:28,29; 16:30.

“And the Scribes and Pharisees watched Him [Christ], whether He would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth” (Luke 6:7,8).

Omnipresence has to do with the fact that God is present everywhere in His creation at all times. King David found it comforting, as we do, that there was no place he could go to escape the presence of God (Psa. 139:7-10). The same was true of Christ when He came to seek and save the lost in Israel. When the Lord was speaking to Nicodemus, He revealed to him that He was also in heaven at that *very moment*. Of course, this went sailing right by Nicodemus due to his unbelief.

“If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but

He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven” (John 3:12,13).

Omnipotence denotes that God is all-powerful, but as it has been correctly said He will never “do anything which is not consistent with His character,” such as sin. Every miracle Christ performed was a demonstration of His Almighty power. The time a storm unexpectedly came up at sea, when the disciples saw the waves sweeping over the bow of the ship, they thought they were “goners.” With the ship filling up with water, fearing they were about to perish, the disciples awoke the Lord, who was sleeping. They would never forget what happened next!

“Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!” (Matt. 8:26b-27).

The Lord also emptied Himself of the outward manifestation of His *glory* so He could accomplish the work of redemption. If He had not temporarily laid aside His glory, men would have perished in the glory of His presence (Ex. 33:17-23). But even here, to demonstrate that He was indeed God, there is one occurrence during His earthly ministry where we are given a glimpse of His glory, albeit in a diminished capacity. Interestingly, it is the Apostle John, who states:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

You will recall how the Lord had taken Peter, James, and John up into the mount and *transformed* Himself before their very eyes that they might see the *glory* that He would have in the coming kingdom. The Scriptures say regarding this event, “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.” Peter, recounting his experience on the mount of transfiguration many years later, shared with His countrymen how they were “eyewitnesses of His *majesty*” (Matt. 17:1,2 cf. II Pet. 1:16-18).

Having totally surrendered Himself to the will of His Father, Christ “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” in the incarnation. Christ was robed in a body of flesh meticulously woven with a human nature that wasn’t tainted with our sin, which was made possible by the miraculous conception and virgin birth. Both these teachings are essential to the Christian faith—to deny them is to deny that Christ was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. Christ’s purpose in the incarnation was to fully experience (without sin) what it was like to be human so He could identify with the plight of the human race.

Christ understands what it is like to lose a friend who is closer than a brother (John 11:33-43). He can relate to having a broken heart over being rejected (Luke 23:34). The Lord became weary from His journey when he traveled to Samaria—He hungered and thirsted, and was tempted on more than one occasion (John 4:6; Matt. 4:3; John 19:28; Heb. 2:18).

Another facet of being human is having a limited knowledge of things. Christ’s absolute dependency on the Father and the will of the Father allowed Him to even taste of what it was like to have an incomplete knowledge of things. The Lord Himself stated concerning His Second Coming: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, **neither the Son, but the Father**” (Mark 13:32). *As we have seen*, at any given moment He could have called upon His Deity, but He chose not always to do so to accomplish the work the Father had called Him to fulfill.

Christ took on the form of a servant. When we think of a servant we think of someone who is lowly and obedient. Christ humbled Himself, being obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, which was the most inhumane of deaths usually reserved for the worst of criminals. Essentially the apostle wanted the Philippians to have the same type of attitude of *humility*. Paul desired that they see what Christ gave up for the welfare of others that they might have life and life eternal. “Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,” so that the Father might be glorified in you, as He was in the Savior. Amen!

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians*, pages 123 & 124, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
2. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pages 215 & 216, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey.

Another Great Ambassador For Christ Goes Home

By Paul M. Sadler



Our dear sister in the Lord, Miss Marion Van Harken, was promoted to glory on February 27th at the age of 92. Miss Marion, as she was affectionately known to all of us here at BBS, was a faithful co-laborer since the early days of the ministry. Pastor Stam and I both corresponded with her over the years, which always proved to be a real blessing. Miss Marion's letters and cards *always* had a thoughtful word of encourage-

ment—to know her, was to love her! In addition to being involved in many areas of the Lord's work, she was also a very gifted artist. This, too, was to the praise of His glory in Christ Jesus.

If there is one passage of Scripture that describes her life and home going it would be Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Miss Marion is going to be deeply missed, but thankfully she's with the Lord, which is far better. Miss Van Harken's great nephew, Dan Keay, wrote this touching tribute about his "beloved" great aunt:

"Early in her life, she was invited to a Bible study in a little schoolhouse in Preakness, New Jersey. There she met C. R. Stam, who had earlier accepted a call to come over from Paterson to lead the Bible study. In her words, 'Mr. Stam put me right to work' and, 'picked me up and took me wherever he was going,' whether it was a Bible study or street revival. The Bible study group later built the *Preakness Bible Church* just up the street from the schoolhouse. Miss Marion worked for years as a Sunday school teacher in the basement of the church—the same basement where the first *Berean Searchlights* were printed. As a dwarf, Miss Marion lived a life with a big handicap, yet she was eager to be used by our Lord as a witness to many people who wondered why she was filled with great joy, peace, love, and hope. She told each person with light in her eyes that she loved the Lord Jesus who had done so much for her. She lived decades longer than the average for a little person, and was even approaching the world record. She lived each day faithfully serving the Lord with a certain sweetness and hope for that day when she would finally be present with her Savior."

Truer words have never been spoken. We extend our love and sympathy to her family and rejoice with them that some day soon we will all be reunited in glory. We indeed do have a "blessed hope" in Christ Jesus!

The Twelve Apostles and Us

By C. R. Stam

OUR
GREAT
COMMISSION



What is it?

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CARRYING OUT THIS COMMISSION TODAY

From what we have said thus far it should now be clear that the commission to the eleven *cannot* be carried out today—and that no one *is* carrying it out. God has rendered this impossible.

Let us now review briefly all the individual details of the commission to confirm this statement.

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

Matthew 28:18-20

"All power..."

This has nothing to do with the dispensation of grace or the Body of Christ. As we have seen, it refers to our Lord's *authority* to reign as King of the "kingdom of heaven" to be established on earth (Matt. 5:3,5; 6:10).

"Go ye therefore..."

The eleven were sent forth *because* all authority was His, and were to proclaim His royal rights. If this were our commission our great message would be our Lord's throne and His authority, rather than his cross and His grace.

Could we preach this today in the light of the subsequent setting aside of Israel and the infinite grace that flows from Calvary? (See Rom. 11:25,32; I Cor. 15:1-3; II Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:13-16; etc.).

"Teach all nations..."

This would bring in the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:1-3, not the forming of the Body of Christ.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...."

If this were our commission it would, as we have shown, put us and our hearers under the law of Moses (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 23:1-3). How *could* we teach this in the light of perhaps a hundred clear passages from Paul's epistles, including the following:

Rom. 3:21: *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested..."*

Gal. 3:13: *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...."*

Rom. 6:14: *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."*

Gal. 2:21: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead [has died] in vain.”

But this part of the so-called “great commission” would also subject us to the precepts of the *Sermon on the Mount* and *all* that our Lord commanded while on earth. We have seen how He said to all of His disciples: “*Sell that ye have and give alms*” (Luke 12:33), and bade them forbear making provisions for the future (Vers. 22-31).

This command is clear enough. *They* understood and obeyed it. But we do not and *cannot* obey it today. Indeed, if we did liquidate our assets and distribute the proceeds to the poor; if we did forbear making provisions for the future, we would be *disobeying* the command of our *ascended* Lord regarding this very matter, for in I Timothy 5:8 the inspired apostle declares:

“But 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 [unbeliever].”

True, in the same letter the apostle bids us to be rich in good works and to be generous contributors to the cause of Christ, but the fact remains that whereas our Lord *on earth* bade His followers *not* to provide for future needs, He *now* bids *us* to do so if we would be true to “the faith,” i.e., the “one faith” proclaimed by Paul for this present dispensation (Eph. 4:5).

If it were not so distressing it would be humorous to observe what many of our “great commission” friends do with Luke 12:31-33.

A favorite, frequently quoted, is Verse 31:

“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

The trouble is, however, that they misinterpret this to mean, “Seek ye the *things* of God.” They just cannot imagine *seeking* the *kingdom*. Thus when they reach Verse 32 their interpretation becomes more ambiguous. The verse itself is clear enough.

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Having already changed the simple meaning of Verse 31, however, they now interpret “the kingdom,” in Verse 32, to mean “spiritual victory” or something of the sort.



But Verse 33: “*Sell that ye have and give alms,*” really presents problems! Moreover the language is so simple that it *cannot* be altered to mean something else. Result: they take two aspirin tablets, as it were, and try to forget it!² How significant it is that the very ones who make so much of Luke 12:31,32, never seem to even quote Verse 33, and *certainly never practice it!*

Actually, the meaning of the whole passage is simple as ABC

when we rightly divide the Word of truth. Our Lord is simply telling His disciples that it is His Father's good pleasure to *give them* the kingdom, to place them in authority, and that if they will "seek" it even now "all these things" (needed food and clothing) will be amply provided for them. Thus He goes on: "*Sell that ye have and give alms.*" It is as simple as that.

In any case, they did *not*, like many today, take lightly our Lord's words in Matthew 7:24-27, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, immediately set out to obey their commission to the letter. Unless we are prepared to do the same we had better acknowledge that there has since been a change in dispensation.

"Baptizing them...."

This would take us back under a dispensation when, as we have seen, water baptism was required *for the remission of sins*. This would indeed make the cross of Christ "of none effect." Nowhere in Paul's epistles is there one command or even a suggestion that we should be baptized with water. It is true that some *read water into* Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27 and Colossians 2:12, but these verses do not mention water or refer to water baptism, and those who read water baptism into them promote "the traditions of the fathers," "make void the Word of God," and unwittingly rob sincere believers of their most precious possessions (Col. 2:8-12).

As we have seen, Paul declares in I Corinthians 1:17 that water baptism was not part of his special commission. True, *during his early ministry* he baptized some; he also

circumcised Timothy, spoke with tongues, prophesied and wrought miracles. Should we practice all these? No, for, as we have seen, this was the dispensation under which he was saved and *from which he emerged* as the glorified Lord gradually revealed to him "the dispensation of the grace of God" and the truths associated with "the mystery" (Acts 26:16; II Cor. 12:1,7). The very *theme* of Paul's great message is that all believers *have been* baptized into "one body," the Body of Christ, and thus into Christ Himself, by "*one baptism,*" that which is performed "*by the operation of God*" (Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26,27; Col. 2:10,12; Eph. 4:5).

"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."³ Amen."

Many, not understanding the parenthetical character of the "mystery" proclaimed by Paul, have concluded on the basis of this promise that our commission is a perpetuation of that given by our Lord to the eleven apostles. On the contrary, however, it is another evidence of the fact that the interruption of the prophetic program by "the dispensation of the grace of God" was then still a secret concerning which our Lord could reveal nothing. How often Paul insists that the revelation committed to him had been "*kept secret since the world began*" (Rom. 16:25), a "*mystery...in other ages not made known....hid in God*" (Eph. 3:9), "*hid from ages and from generations, but NOW...made manifest to His saints*" (Col. 1:26). Thus our Lord, in His statement, looked beyond this entire parenthetical dispensation to the

end of the “age” that pertained to *them and their labors*.

MARK'S ACCOUNT

Mark 16:15-18

“Preach the gospel....”

To ascertain the content of this gospel we may not anticipate revelation and find our answer in the Acts or Paul's epistles. These were not yet written. The term “*the gospel*” denotes *prior reference*, therefore we must consider *the preceding context* and ask ourselves what “gospel” they *had been* preaching. When we do this the answer is simple. They had been preaching “*the gospel of the kingdom*” (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14,15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2,60), and our Lord was now sending them forth to preach this same gospel, for the King who had been crucified was alive again; raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David. And this is in fact what Peter preached under this commission (Acts 2:29,30; 3:19-21). The gospel of the grace of God was not revealed until years later through Paul (Acts 20:24).

We cannot preach the “gospel” of Mark 16 today, for the risen King was again rejected by His own nation and is now a royal Exile.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved....”

How could we possibly preach this without contradicting Romans 3:24; 4:5; I Corinthians 1:17 (Cf. 4:16; 11:1), Eph. 2:8-10; 4:5; Titus 3:5 and many other passages from Paul's epistles?

“And these signs shall follow them that believe”:

The fulfillment of this part of the so-called “great commission”

has indeed been rendered *impossible*. We have already accounted for the many alleged miracles performed by the Roman Catholic Church, the Christian Scientists, the Unity Movement and other cults and sects, plus our Pentecostalist brethren, but the promise to the eleven was clear and emphatic: “These signs SHALL follow THEM THAT BELIEVE,” and today believers in general are *not* performing any of these great miracles. Where they are seemingly, or allegedly, being performed they are for the most part held suspect by many, while even the rankest unbelievers acknowledged the mighty miracles wrought under the commission given to the eleven.⁴

It should be noted here that since these miracles were *signs* of our Lord's Messiahship and evidences that His kingdom was “at hand” (Isa. 35:5,6), all those who were healed would have lived right on indefinitely had Israel accepted the King and His kingdom. But the King was rejected, so they all died again and to this day the death rate remains “one apiece.” This explains the words “until now” in Romans 8:22.

THE COMMISSION IN LUKE AND THE ACTS

Luke 24:46-48 and Acts 1:8

“Beginning at Jerusalem.” “Jerusalem...all Judaea...Samaria...the uttermost part of the earth.”

We have seen that today it would be as impossible, as it would be foolish, to attempt to carry out the so-called “great commission” by beginning again at Jerusalem which, even yet, has not been brought to Messiah's feet.

Should a group of missionaries wish to preach the gospel there they would either have to enter as something other than Christian missionaries and work underground, or they would be deported forthwith. Great credit is due those doctors, nurses, etc., who have entered as such and have been able to show individual Israelites that God loves them and that Christ died to save them. But this is something very different from launching a campaign to preach “the gospel of the kingdom” in the city of Jerusalem as the apostles did.

“And ye are witnesses of these things.”

What things? Very evidently the apostles were witnesses of the death and resurrection of the rejected King. The contexts in both Luke and the Acts bear this out. Remember, neither the death nor the resurrection of Christ were then being preached as they were later proclaimed under the revelation committed to Paul. Under their commission the twelve did not preach the death and resurrection of Christ as good news. They rather *accused* their hearers of Christ’s death and *warned* them that He was alive again (See Acts 2:23,30,31,36; 3:13-15; 4:10). Their good news was that Israel could now repent and that Christ would then return, and with Him the long-promised “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:19-21,25,26).

“Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

The twelve were to be “endued with power from on high” at the fulfillment of “the promise of the Father,” i.e., the coming of the Holy

Spirit. But Pentecost is now long gone, and the phrase, “they were ALL filled with the Holy Ghost,” stands in sharp contrast to the lack of the Spirit’s infilling in the Church today. Also, the miraculous signs, the outward manifestations of the Spirit’s filling, were withdrawn with the passing of that dispensation.

And shall we now wait *again* for the fulfillment of the promise, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”? This is what some are doing, even though this promise was fulfilled in due time, “when the day of Pentecost was fully come.” Nowhere in Paul’s epistles—or anywhere else—are we instructed to wait for *another* fulfillment of this promise, much less are we told to *pray* for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, with the passing of Pentecost the recovery of *Pentecostal* power has been rendered impossible. How unscriptural and unwarranted, then, are the “tarrying meetings” of modern Pentecostalism!

It should be carefully noted here that while *all* the believers at Pentecost were *filled* with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), it is never indicated that the whole Church, or all the members of any *local* church of Paul’s day were filled with the Holy Spirit. The Galatian believers were certainly not “all filled with the Holy Spirit”; they “bit and devoured one another” (Gal. 5:15). The Philippian believers were certainly not “all filled with the Holy Spirit”; there was dissension there between two of the women—and those who sided with each (Phil. 4:1-3). The Colossian saints were certainly

not “all filled with the Holy Spirit”; they had entertained notions of gnosticism, which Paul had to correct (Col. 2:8,18-23). The Thesalonian believers were certainly not “all filled with the Holy Spirit”; they had failed to heed Paul’s word regarding the coming of Christ for the members of His Body and were in fear about their departed loved ones (I Thes. 4:13; II Thes. 2:5). There were other moral and spiritual deficiencies among all the members of all of the churches founded by Paul, as there are among all the members of the Church today. See Paul’s personal testimony as to this in Romans 7:18-25; Philippians 3:12-14. Rather than “all” of us being filled with the Holy Spirit, *completely* under His control, so that it is not possible to blunder or sin, *none* of us is thus filled. Rather the filling of the Spirit is held out to us today as a *challenge*, a blessing of grace to be appropriated *by faith*. This is likewise true of every Christian virtue under the present dispensation of grace. Thus the apostle *exhorts* us:

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

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

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

None of us has as yet been *filled* with any of these, for in this present dispensation what God provides by grace we must appropriate by faith.⁵ What a challenge!


JOHN’S ACCOUNT

John 20:21-23

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

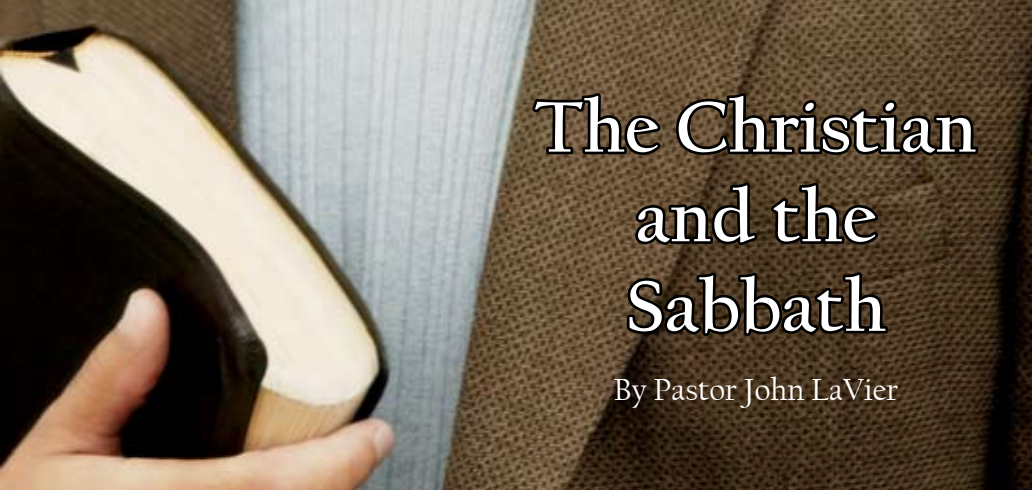
The Father had sent our Lord to proclaim to Israel “the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18,19), and now He, in turn, sent the eleven to do the same (“even so send I you”), for the favored nation was to be given another opportunity to repent and turn to Christ (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:19-26). But Israel rejected the risen, ascended Christ as they had rejected Him while on earth. Thus they have been set aside as a nation, and judicially blinded. How, then, can our Lord’s words “even so send I you” apply to *us* today? How, in the light of Romans 11:7,25, and many similar passages regarding the (temporary) setting aside of Israel, can the so-called “great commission” possibly apply to *us*?

“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Though all the foregoing segments of the commission to the eleven should apply to us today—and none of them do—surely *this* part of the commission *could not possibly* apply to us. *None* of us are completely filled with, or controlled by, the Holy Spirit. *None* of us have the divine gift of knowledge. *None* of us are to represent our Lord officially as judges in His kingdom. How, then, are we in a position to remit sins? Thus obedience to this segment of the commission too has now been rendered *impossible*. 

Endnotes

2. ©iStockphoto.com/Sharon Dominick.
3. Or, “age.”
4. See the author’s booklet, *This is That*.
5. For a more thorough discussion of this see the author’s *True Spirituality*.



The Christian and the Sabbath

By Pastor John LaVier

If Jesus observed the seventh-day sabbath, and if Paul, many years later, also seemed to observe it, then why do we gather for worship on the first day of the week? When was the Sabbath changed from the seventh day, Saturday, to the first day, Sunday?

These are interesting questions, the answers to which can only be found in the Word of God.

In Exodus 31:13,17 we learn that the seventh-day sabbath was a sign between Jehovah and THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. It was a part of the Mosaic law, and when Jesus Christ was here on earth, as a minister of the circumcision, He did not in any way interfere with Israel's law program. He was made under the law, He lived under the law, and He died under the law. As One with His nation, He kept the law and observed the seventh-day sabbath (Luke 4:16). Christ did not come to bring an end to Israel's law regime. He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Remember, the law was given to *Israel*. The nation and the law stood together. When Israel rejected and crucified Christ and then continued in their rejection, God cast the nation away, temporarily (Rom. 11:15). Then Paul writes in Romans 11:25, "That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Surely those today who claim to be Israel, or who confuse Israel with the Body of Christ, are also blinded.

When Israel was thus set aside, the law, and all religion, including sabbath-keeping, was set aside as well. When Paul was called out and sent to the Gentiles with the gospel of the grace of God, he resisted every attempt to put the Gentiles under the law. The council at Jerusalem was convened for that very reason, for some had said, "That it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Even Peter saw the folly of trying to force the law upon the Gentile believers who had been saved by grace, without the

deeds of the law or any religious works. He said, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). The decision of the council was, “As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing” (Acts 21:25).

Some time after this, Paul wrote to the Gentiles, “For ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14), and that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). He also wrote that Christ had “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross,” and that therefore no man should judge us “in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, OR OF THE SABBATH DAYS” (Col. 2:14-16). The word “sabbath” means “rest” and the believer in this dispensation does not rest in a day, but in a Person, and that Person is the Blessed Son of God Himself.

While it is true, as stated in our question, that Paul seemingly did observe the sabbath, let us note that during the early part of Paul’s ministry the gospel was to the Jew first. He said, “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you.” Naturally, in endeavoring to preach to the Jews, the best time and place to contact them would be in their synagogue on the sabbath day. See Acts 9:20; 13:14; 14:1; 18:4; 19:8.


When Paul thus gathered with the Jews, it was simply that he might reach them. He was becoming a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews, but nowhere did he ever tell a single Gentile to observe the seventh-day sabbath. In fact, it would seem that the

“During this age of Grace God does not want man to be religious, but righteous.”

Gentiles were accustomed to fellowship and worship on the *first* day of the week, as for instance at Troas, “And upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7). That this was the usual procedure seems to be indicated also by 1 Corinthians 16:2, “Upon the *first* day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” Nowhere, though, is the first day of the week referred to in Scripture as the “Christian Sabbath,” nor even as the “Lord’s Day.”

During this age of Grace God does not want man to be religious, but righteous. Those who turn away from the grace of God to religion, or to the weak and beggarly elements of the law, with its observance of days, are called “foolish” and “bewitched,” and the inspired apostle said that he was afraid of all such. See Galatians 2:21; 3:1-3; 4:9-11.

However, even though we do not observe Sunday or any other day of the week because of commandment or legal constraint, and while we

recognize the fact that every moment of every day should be dedicated to the Lord, yet we do praise Him that we live in a land where we are permitted on one day of the week to lay aside our secular tasks and to come together for the worship and service of the Lord. Surely this is pleasing in God's sight, and He will hold us accountable for our use or abuse of this great privilege. It is a sad commentary on our times to note that America is fast changing Sunday into "Fun-day." It only proves that we are living in days when men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 

John LaVier served as the pastor of *Grace Church* in Indianapolis, Indiana for 47 years until his retirement. He was one of the founding fathers of the Grace Movement who never wavered in his stand for the Word, rightly divided.

Question Box

"If God knew that some people would go to hell, why did He create man?"

God cannot be held responsible for the decision of some of His "offspring" (Acts 17:28) to refuse to believe on Him and thus face eternal perdition.

We can compare this to how parents cannot be held responsible for the decisions of their offspring (although some in modern society are wrongly trying to change this). If my son grows up to choose a life of crime and become a murderer, and is subsequently sentenced to death for his crime, I am not responsible for this. If I raised him right, his bad choices and their consequences are his own responsibility. And if this be true for my son, it is certainly more true for my grandson and great-grandson, etc.

In the same way, God cannot be held responsible for Adam's sin, nor for Cain's decision not to believe God, nor for the eternal ruin of any of Adam's descendants. "God hath made man upright" (Eccl. 7:29), and raised him right in Eden, and so cannot be held responsible for the bad choices of men.

If some of my descendants choose evil and are punished for their crimes, it does not mean that I was wrong to choose to start a family. Likewise, if some of God's descendants (Luke 3:38) choose not to believe on Christ and are lost eternally, this does not mean that God was wrong to choose to start the family of man.

—Pastor Kurth



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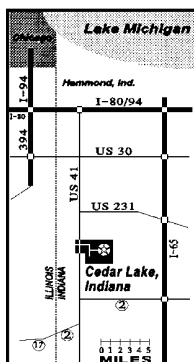
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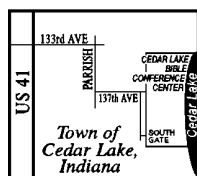
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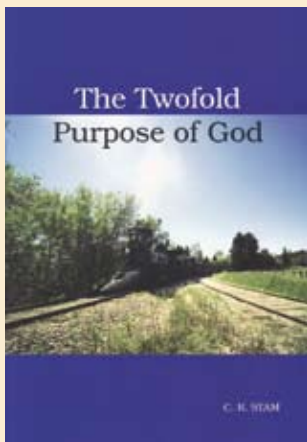


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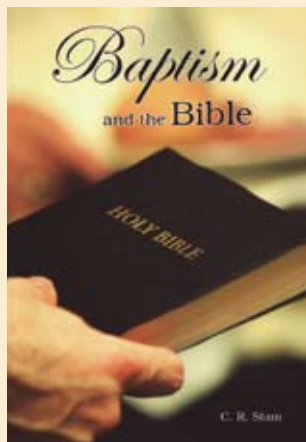
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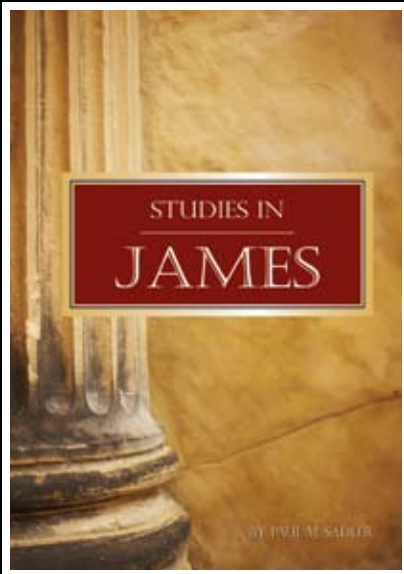
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For brochures, directions, and additional information, please contact: Julie Cotner at rockymountaingracecamp@gmail.com or call (262) 689-6890. For more information about accommodations visit www.hermitbasin.com.

***Happy Camping!
And don't forget to bring a friend!***

Paul Beseches the Church (Part 3)

Romans 15:30-33

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

In Paul's request that the believers at Rome join together in earnest prayer on his behalf is found an important principle that we should take note of. Prayer is to be through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "*one Mediator between God and men*" (I Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:34) and in "*in the love of the Spirit.*" It is not our love for the Holy Spirit that is in view here, but the fact that "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us*" (Rom. 5:5). We approach the Father through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and experience God's love through the sealing and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Who baptizes us into Christ (I Cor. 3:16; 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14). It is God's love for us as manifested in Jesus Christ that should constrain, or motivate us to serve Him (II Cor. 5:14-15). Knowing that he would be in danger from unbelieving Jews in Judea, he asked for prayer for his personal safety and that the gift he had collected for the poor saints in Judea (Rom. 15:25-29)

would be acceptable. His goal was to eventually travel to Rome "*with joy by the will of God*" in order to "*be refreshed*" along with the saints there.

God answered this prayer. Paul's gift was accepted and he was kept from physical harm by being arrested, and was sent to Rome as a prisoner and had a fruitful ministry there.

Intercessory prayer is an important aspect of successful ministry. We need to pray as individuals and together for other believers, especially for those who are involved in ministering God's Word (Paul requested it throughout his ministry; see Eph. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3,4; I Thes. 5:25; II Thes. 3:1-2; Phile. 22). When we pray, it should always be with the goal of God's will ultimately being done. When we don't know exactly how to pray, we are to pray to the best of our understanding trusting that the Holy Spirit will make "*intercession for the saints according to the will of God*" (Rom. 8:26-27).

Fall Semester begins August 20, 2007!

For more information about **BBI**, please contact Dr. W. Edward Bedore at: **Berean Bible Institute**, 116 S. Kettle Moraine Drive, P.O. Box 587, Slinger, WI 53086-0587, phone: (262) 644-5504, fax: (262) 644-5507, e-mail: bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org, web address: www.bereanbibleinstitute.org.



NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Web Site Still Soaring: Last month when we reported that 31,435 people had visited our web site in January, we didn't think it could get much better. Thankfully, we were wrong! In February, 31,682 people visited www.bereanbiblesociety.org—in a month with only 28 days! Although we are gaining new heights every day, we're still praying, "Lord, plant our feet on *higher ground!*"

A Dayton Grace Bible Conference will be held Saturday, May 19th and Sunday, May 20th at the *Holiday Inn Dayton Mall* in Miamisburg, Ohio. Several Grace pastors will join featured speaker Pastor Timothy Stonecipher in ministering the rightly divided Word. For more information, be sure to call Pastor Trent J. Cole, Sr. at (937) 304-3524.

The Grace Believers' Conference in Bitely, Michigan, will bring Grace believers together this year from July 27th through 29th. Inviting rooms are available at the scenic *Legends Ranch* nearby. Just call Pastor Ken Lyons for further information: (231) 745-9595.

Central Indiana Bible Conference: The *Second Sunday Bible Fellowship* would like to invite all Grace believers to fellowship with them on Sunday, August 12th, at the *Red Bridge Park Community Building* in Cicero, Indiana. This conference will feature guest speaker Pastor Paul M. Sadler. Contact Mike & Roberta Karnes at (317) 984-4799 for more information.

Pastoral Opportunity: *Grace Community Church* in Sioux Falls, South Dakota is presently looking for a pastor. They are a small but well-established Grace church located in an extremely fast-growing city. If you have a desire to teach and preach God's Word, rightly divided, please contact GBC board chairman Dwight Johnson at [dwightj@iw.net](mailto:dwrightj@iw.net), or call him at (605) 372-4701.

The Bible Church of Webb City, Missouri, is also looking for a pastor. This church has a fine building that is fully paid for, and a sixty year history of *rightly dividing the Word of truth* that is absolutely priceless. If you or someone you know is interested in pastoring a church with a solid core of Grace believers, contact church secretary Patty House at (417) 673-2733, or at P_house@swbell.net.

*Our cover lighthouse photo was taken by Gail Wilver of Naples, Florida. The *Yaquina Head Lighthouse* is located near Newport, Oregon. It was built in 1873, and standing 93 feet tall, it is Oregon's tallest lighthouse. The light shines 162 feet above the ocean and can be seen 19 miles out to sea. It is still an active aid to navigation.

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