

The **BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2012



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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.

The Berean Searchlight is the official organ of the Berean Bible Society, and is sent free of charge to any who request it.

Editor: Ricky L. Kurth — Graphic Design: Kevin J. Sadler

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The Berean Searchlight (ISSN 0005-8890), November 2012. Vol. 73, Number 8.

The Berean Searchlight is published monthly (except July) at no subscription price, by Berean Bible Society, N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022-0756. Periodical postage paid at Germantown, WI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Berean Searchlight, N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022-0756 and additional mailing offices.



From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

Earlier this year, at the church that I pastor in the south suburbs of Chicago, Mariah Bright, one of our college-aged young people, asked me, “Why can’t we have a women’s conference here at *Faith Bible Church*?” I remember thinking at the time, “I’ll tell you why we can’t have a women’s conference—because we’ve never had one before, that’s why!”

I have to admit, I’m a creature of habit and routine. For me, church has always meant preaching on Sunday, going home to study for a week, and then coming back the following Sunday to preach again. There clearly wasn’t any room in this monotony for a women’s conference! Because this suggestion was made by one of our young people, however, I decided to encourage her by stepping outside of my comfort zone and approving the idea, and I am *so* thankful I did!

The conference was easily one of the highlights of my spiritual life. The ladies asked me, as the pastor, to sit in and moderate the meetings. From the opening message, I remember sensing that there was a different feeling in the air. I remember thinking, “Wow, so this is what happens when women minister to women!” There was an interest and an openness among the ladies that I had not seen before, not even in our adult Sunday school class and Wednesday night Bible study, meetings that always involve discussion after the message. While our ladies always participate in those discussions, the spirit among the ladies and their guests at this conference was decidedly different. I was witnessing with my own eyes the wisdom of God expressed in Paul’s words to Titus, where he told this young pastor to let “the aged women...teach the young women” (Titus 2:3,4). With all this in mind, we are seriously considering adding a women’s fellowship to the ministries of our church.

I share these things with you not just to make you smile if your church already has a women’s fellowship, and you are wondering why it has taken so long for this creature of habit to broaden his horizons. I share these things rather to encourage others to consider tapping into the power of this amazing ministry potential that might be right there under your nose, as it was under mine for so many years. Who knows, maybe this time next year, you too will be forming your own women’s fellowship, as you bask in the afterglow of one of the most exciting spiritual times you’ve enjoyed in years—your church’s first women’s conference!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Ricky Kurth





Freedom's Light

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

**“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
—I Thessalonians 5:18**

I am currently reading the fascinating autobiography of Governor William Bradford, who courageously led the Pilgrims to the New World in 1620. The Governor documents how their quest for “religious freedom” brought them face to face with many perils. He describes how, *en route* to what we now know as Cape Cod, they nearly went to a watery grave when the supporting beam of the *Mayflower's* mainmast snapped. By the providence of God, one of the families on board had brought a jack, which was used to reinforce the beam.

But this was only the beginning of sorrows. The arrival of the Pilgrims on the shores of liberty was also filled with many hazards, as nearly one-half of their number perished the first year due to disease. Nevertheless, their faith in our Lord remained unmoveable. Throughout it all, they found much for which to be thankful that “first” *Thanksgiving*. And so do we, for our “freedom of worship” was originally conceived in their sacrifice.

Today, however, this freedom is being threatened on every hand, both here and abroad. Perhaps the greatest threat is Islam! Christians around the world are being persecuted for sharing Christ with those who are living in darkness. Islam, of course, is a religion of hate, which is clearly seen in the riots and recent murders of innocent Americans in Muslim countries. The hallmark of Christianity, on the other hand, is *love*.

As we gather with family and friends this *Thanksgiving*, may we be mindful of the great price that was paid to secure our liberty.

May we be mindful that Christ also died for Muslims; only He can deliver them from the brutality of their religion and set them free from a life of oppression.

May we be mindful of our troops overseas who are the guardians of our nation, preserving our freedom to worship here in America without fear of persecution. Many of these defenders of our values will be sitting in a bunker this *Thanksgiving* in some faraway country. There was a popular saying at the time of our country's founding which is as true now as it was then: “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.”

May we all give thanks for the salvation that we enjoy in Christ, even the forgiveness of our dreadful sins that would have condemned us. “O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever” (Psa. 107:1). AMEN!



The Ten Lepers

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

“In her book, *Discipline, the Glad Surrender*, Elisabeth Elliot reveals four meaningful lessons to be learned from the discipline of our possessions: “The first lesson is that all things are given by God....Because God gives us things indirectly by enabling us to make them with our own hands (out of things He has made, of course) or to earn the money to buy them...we are prone to forget that He gave them to us. We should be thankful!

“Thanksgiving requires the recognition of the Source. It implies contentment with what is given, not complaint...it excludes covetousness.

“The third lesson is that things can be material for sacrifice. The Father pours out His blessings on us; we, His creatures, receive them with open hands, give thanks, and lift them up as an offering back to Him....

“This lesson leads naturally to the fourth which is that things are given to us to enjoy for a while.... What is not at all fitting or proper is that we should set our hearts on them. Temporal things must be treated as temporal things—received, given thanks for, offered back but enjoyed.”¹

A DREADFUL DISEASE

“And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.”

—Luke 17:11,12

There are two recurring themes threaded throughout Luke’s Gospel that are worth noting. The first has to do with *Jerusalem*. As the Lord ministered along the dusty paths of this sin-cursed world, there came a point when

He set His face, like flint, toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He would not be deterred from fulfilling that which He came to accomplish. Love ordered His steps! Under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, Luke pauses to highlight the City of God more often than his contemporaries who wrote the other Gospels. Our narrative here in Luke 17 demonstrates this.

The other thread woven throughout Luke's Gospel is his emphasis on the physical aspect of the Lord's earthly ministry. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that Luke was a *physician*. He would, of course, notice matters of nature and physiology. It was given to Luke to record the accounts of the miraculous conception, virgin birth, and circumcision of the Savior. It stands to reason that he would also place special emphasis on the Lord's *healing* ministry, often giving a more detailed description of these miracles. And it should not be overlooked that Luke chronicled healings that the other Gospel writers didn't touch on, such as the one we have here, regarding the ten lepers.

“There met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Luke 17:12b,13).

As the Lord passed through the borders of Samaria and Galilee, He entered a village along the way where He was met by ten lepers who had heard of His wondrous works. These ten lepers knew that the only hope of being restored to physical health was Jesus. Notice though, they “stood afar off.” According to the Law

of Moses, they had to remain at a distance with the lower part of their face covered and announce that they were *unclean* (Lev. 13:45). Leprosy in biblical times was a dreadful, disfiguring disease that left its victims with deep physical and emotional scars.

Telltale signs of leprosy include white blotches, similar in appearance to psoriasis (Ex. 4:6). While leprosy often maimed its victims, it didn't necessarily disable them entirely, as witnessed here when the ten men are said to have *stood* at a distance to announce themselves unclean.



While nine of the ten lepers were probably Jewish, we know that at least one was a Samaritan (Luke 17:16). Of course, there was no love lost between the Jews and Samaritans; in fact, they hated one another with a passion (John 4:9; 8:48). But here we have Jew

and Samaritan joined together in a common plight. As the old axiom goes, "Misery loves company." It is important to understand that the Jewish contingent of the ten had been ostracized by their countrymen in accordance with the Law. They had to live outside the camp (Num. 5:2), making it necessary for them to reside, in this case, in Samaria.

The leper was required to broadcast that he was "*unclean, unclean*" (Lev. 13:45) so others could avoid being defiled. Leprosy was an unholy affliction in time past, the symptoms of which are clearly described by the prophet Isaiah:

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more?...From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified [softened] with ointment" (Isa. 1:4-6).

Both the instructions of Moses regarding leprosy in Leviticus, Chapter 13 and Isaiah's words are a clear indication that there is a deeper meaning to this terrible disease. It was far more than a public health issue, although this could not be ignored. The problem of sin that plagues us and the disease of leprosy are strikingly similar. One author effectively shows that the two go together in the Scriptures.

"Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3) and cannot be helped by mere 'surface' measures. Like sin, leprosy spreads (Lev. 13:7,8); and as it spreads, it defiles (Lev. 13:44-46). Because of his defilement, a leprous person had to be isolated outside the camp (Lev. 13:46), and lost sinners one day will be isolated in Hell. People with leprosy were looked on as 'dead' (Num. 12:9-12), and garments infected with leprosy were fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:52). How important it is for lost sinners to trust Jesus Christ and get rid of their 'leprosy'!"

THE LORD'S COMPASSION

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13).

The ten lepers were standing at a distance due to their defilement, so it was necessary for them to raise their voices in hopes of getting the Master's attention. Of course, as was the case with Nathanael (John 1:47-50), the Lord knew in advance that He would pass by them on His way to Jerusalem. Everything the Lord did during His earthly ministry had an intended purpose. In this case, it was to teach His disciples, and us, by way of application, about the importance of being *thankful*.

When these ten disease-ridden men cried out, the Great Physician was moved with *compassion*, which is an attribute that should characterize every member of the Body of Christ. He then instructed them to go show themselves to the priest (v. 14). This was done in accordance with the Law, since

only the priest could pronounce a leper clean or unclean. Without exception, every time the Lord healed a leper of his leprosy, the healing was called a *cleansing*, and for good reason: It typified God the Father's declaration that the sinner is forgiven or cleansed of his sin on the grounds of the shed blood of Christ.

It is interesting how the Lord used different methods to exhibit His ability to heal those in need. As we have noted above, the Lord instructed the ten lepers from "afar off" to go show themselves to the priest. Earlier in the Gospel according to Luke, He handled things much differently:

"And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And He charged him to...show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Luke 5:12-14).

In both instances, the Lord healed those who came to Him, but in the first case, He touched the leper and personally cleansed him. But then in order to fully restore this man's testimony among his countrymen, the Lord commanded him to present himself to the priest to be pronounced clean. With the ten lepers, on the other hand, the Lord never came near them and did not cleanse them. Instead He merely instructed them to appear before the priest. We believe these

two accounts demonstrate how the Lord dealt with those who came to Him according to their need and the degree of their faith. It is surely a validation of His mighty power to heal whomever, whenever, and however He chooses, whether kneeling in His presence or standing at a distance.

"And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests" (Luke 17:14).



The news that the Lord was healing the afflicted spread like wildfire through the towns and villages. It is helpful to bear in mind that there weren't clinics and hospitals on every corner as we have today. Those who contracted a disease such as leprosy usually withered away until death claimed them. So it isn't surprising that when the ten lepers saw the Master, they immediately knew He could cure them of their malady.

This observation is also confirmed by their response to the Lord's command to present themselves to the priests in Jerusalem. The very nature of His words required *obedience* and faith on their part, which is clearly seen in their actions. There wasn't a moment's hesitation; they hurriedly

turned to do as they were told. As we have already seen, on some occasions, the Lord touched the afflicted, then there were those times when He merely spoke and the person was healed on the spot. But here, interestingly, the Spirit of the Lord went before the ten lepers before He acted. It was *after* they had departed, they were all miraculously, instantaneously healed. These various methods are intended to illustrate the Lord's power to heal those who came to Him in any given circumstance, to the glory of God.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed” (Luke 17:14).

We can only imagine what that moment must have been like when those ten lepers were made whole. They undoubtedly paused, in absolute amazement, to look at their hands and touch their faces. There's no question about it—it was a life-changing experience! Their cries of “*unclean, unclean,*” were suddenly turned into exultation: “*We're healed, we're healed!*”

At this point, the proper response of these ten outcasts should have been to drop to their knees on the spot and thank God for His goodness and mercy. Although all of them were miraculously healed, what Luke states next is nothing short of astonishing:

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” (Luke 17:15-17).

God abhors *ungratefulness*. Yet nine of the ten lepers who were healed of this incurable disease were so preoccupied with themselves that they didn't take a moment to express their gratitude to the Master. While they were obedient to the Lord's command, they were *unthankful* for His supernatural act of kindness. The very fact that the Lord had to ask the question, “Were there not ten cleansed?” should break our hearts. It illustrates that He holds *gratitude* in high regard and misses it when we fail to express it.



In God's providence, the Lord purposely passed by these poor souls to heal them of their affliction that it might ultimately be to His honor and glory. But nine of the ten hurried away and never returned to convey their appreciation to the Master. With that said, before we are too hard on them, we too often hurry away clutching our blessings, but never return to give thanks to the Giver and Sustainer of all things.

It would have been the natural inclination for the one who did turn back to continue with the others, but he first wanted to give

thanks and praise to God. He fell at the feet of the Master and glorified God for His mercy—an act, we might add, that *pleased* the Lord. By his words and actions, he gave recognition to the *Source* of his restoration.

“There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (vv. 18,19).

The stranger here is identified as a *Samaritan*, of all people. You would think that he would be the least likely of the group to respond in a way that brought praise to God. It should always be remembered that the mercy of God is visited on both the just and unjust (Matt. 5:45). This appears to be the case here. All the lepers received physical deliverance from their infirmity, but only the Samaritan received something infinitely better—he was *saved* from his sins. His *faith* made him whole physically and spiritually, which the Lord made a point to emphasize. The others may have been pronounced clean by the priest, but this man was made spiritually whole by the Son of God.

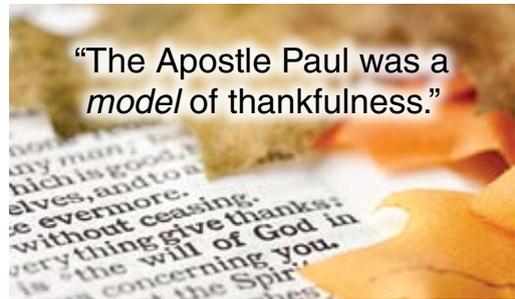
With God’s help, may this account remind us of the importance of being *thankful* for the bountiful blessings the Lord has granted us, whether they are spiritual, physical or material in nature, as Elisabeth Elliot pointed out earlier. This should be especially true of those who have had the eyes of their understanding opened to the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery.

A MODEL OF THANKFULNESS

The Apostle Paul was a *model* of thankfulness. When he wrote to the saints at Ephesus, he was genuinely grateful that they were saved and living for the Lord.

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph. 1:15,16).

The apostle did not selfishly feel he was the only one who could effectively serve Christ. He *thanked* God that others were standing for the truth as well. He never placed himself above others, but time after time sought to encourage the brethren. This is seen in his words to this same assembly: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given” (3:8).



“The Apostle Paul was a *model* of thankfulness.”

Perhaps this is a good time to ask ourselves a pointed question: When was the last time you thanked the Lord for someone else’s faithfulness? When was the last time you offered a word of encouragement to a brother or sister in Christ that you knew was struggling in the faith? You see, our personal ministries aren’t about us; they are about others.

We must guard against becoming *ungrateful*, which those before us lived to regret. In fact, “when they [the Gentiles] knew God, they glorified Him not as God, **neither were thankful**; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). Rather than being grateful that God had revealed Himself to them and blessed them beyond measure, they turned their backs on the Creator, which brought on His judgment. May we never be guilty of the same. As believers in Christ, we should be the most *thankful* people on the face of the earth.

May this *Thanksgiving* cause us to remember and remember well the blessings with which God has favored us in regard to salvation. You see, we too have been cleansed from the leprosy of sin through the finished work of Christ. A day should never pass that we fail to render praise and thanksgiving for all the benefits that flow from Calvary.

Let’s also take the opportunity to express to each of our loved ones how much they mean to us. *I know*, you’re thinking they already know how much you love them. That may be true, but when was the last time you told them how thankful you are for them and everything they do? They will surely appreciate hearing it again! To express gratitude has many advantages! For one, “The seeds of discouragement will not grow in a *thankful* heart.”³

The old Dutch folk song *Kremsers*, from which we get the melody for “We Gather Together,” was written at about the time of the

Pilgrim’s crossing to America. It is very appropriate at this time of year:



“We gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing,

He chastens and hastens His will to make known;

The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing:

Sing praises to His name—He forgets not His own.”⁴

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God” (II Cor. 4:15).

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving in the Lord with family and friends! And all the Lord’s people said, AMEN! 

Endnotes

1. Taken from Elisabeth Elliot, *Discipline: The Glad Surrender* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell/Baker Publishing Group, 1982), p. 105. Narrator unknown, *In Touch*, May, 1989. Passage accessible at www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/m/materialiam.htm.

2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, 2003), Volume 1, p. 186.

3. Author unknown.

4. John W. Peterson (ed.), *Great Hymns of the Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc., 1968), no. 21, “We Gather Together,” translated by Theodore Baker.

Letter Excerpt Extras

Recently we received the following two e-mails from a man who (perhaps just like you) is working hard to share God's rightly divided Word with others:

From our Inbox:

"The tongue-talker for whom I printed your webpage and gave it to her (that coupled with a year of chiseling away at that flaky doctrine that consists of no foundation) responded to me today to say that she is seeing it (talking about seeing the light). She attributes this primarily to your chronological account of Paul's writings. You did a good job on that, and that may be the evidence that she needed to see the light...When you read the Word without the chronological account of Paul, I guess the rest of the epistles could read as if they're some sort of continuation of the Book of Acts, that is to say the gifts. So your webpage surely has been helpful and maybe the straw of evidence that broke the camel's back, so to speak."

This encouraging e-mail was followed soon after by another from the same brother:

From our Inbox:

"Praise God, my brother! The tongue-talker in question renounces it now! In great part she says, from your chronological order of Paul's ministry. She can see it all and is now convinced that tongues and the rest of the then signs were there for the Jew as the Jews require a sign and she can see that after the Lord turned his focus to the Gentile that now the signs are no longer required and have ceased as Paul said that they would. So praise the Lord for a charismatic who finally, after a year of wrestling with her, has seen the light. I, and she, are so thankful for your webpage that I stumbled upon, as it put things in proper time perspective to her."

This brother's mention of how it took *a year* for his friend to see the light reminds us that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, *patient*..." (II Tim. 2:24).



Who Blinded the Jews?

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

“Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Rom. 11:7).

To purposely blind someone *physically* is a serious offense, for it leads to a difficult life for the one who has been blinded. To purposely blind someone *spiritually*, however, is an infinitely more serious matter, for it leads to an eternity in the lake of fire. So when Paul speaks here of some in Israel who were spiritually blinded, it is important that we determine who it is that blinded the Jews of whom he spoke.

In light of the serious nature of this issue, it is surprising to hear the Lord Jesus Christ lay the blame for Israel’s blindness squarely at the feet of God the Father. Speaking of the Jews who refused to believe on Him, the Lord explained,

“Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

“He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (John 12:39,40).

These verses have been the cause of much concern for believers down through the centuries. What kind of God would do such a thing? It hardly seems fair that God would deliberately blind someone so that they could not believe the gospel, and then condemn them to hell for not believing the gospel. Wouldn’t that give these unbelievers an excuse on Judgment Day? Wouldn’t they be able to say to God on that day, “You can’t condemn me to Hell for not believing! The reason I couldn’t believe is because You blinded me!” What answer could a just God possibly give to such a charge? As you can see, it is important to come to a proper understanding of this verse. The character and justice of God are at stake here!

Guilty as Charged

We must begin by acknowledging that there is no question that God blinded those Jews, for the Lord was very clear about this. The question we must ask then is *how* He blinded them, and the answer to this question is found in the text the Lord was quoting here:

“Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert...” (Isa. 6:10).

Here the prophet is told to shut the eyes of the people of Israel, which would of course blind them to whatever truth God was trying to convey to them. But notice carefully the means by which God instructed Isaiah to accomplish this goal. He told the prophet to shut their eyes by making the heart of the people *fat*, and their ears *heavy*. What makes a heart fat—too little information or too much? What makes ears heavy—the sound of too little truth or the sound of too much? If you have ever heard the expression “blinded by the light,” you know the answer to these questions, for too much light will blind you just as surely as too little.

As you know, you can blind someone by putting them in a dark room with absolutely no source of light by which to see. Years ago when this writer was in Alcatraz (as a tourist, not as an inmate!), our guide herded our tour group into one of the solitary confinement chambers in this most notorious of prisons. When he

closed the door, the darkness was impenetrable. You literally could not see your hand in front of your face, and each of us knew what it was like to be totally blind.



But as you know, it is also possible to blind someone with *too much* light. Modern photography seems to have somehow overcome the problem that we well remember as a boy, that of being temporarily blinded by the flash of a camera’s flash bulb. But to this day, even the best of baseball outfielders sometimes drops even the most routine fly ball when blinded by the sun or by the bright lights that illuminate night games.

This then is how God blinded the Jews in our Lord’s day, not by *withholding* the light of truth from them, but by graciously *providing* it, blazing it forth in the clarity of the Lord’s teachings, which were accompanied by the miracles that God did by Him in the midst of them (Acts 2:22). Remember, in explaining why His enemies could not believe, the Lord quoted God’s instructions to Isaiah to “shut their eyes” by making their ears heavy with the sound of the truth and their hearts fat with understanding. Hearts are made *lean* by withholding truth, they

are made *fat* by giving truth in abundance, something both Isaiah and the Lord were faithful to do.

After speaking of how some in Israel were blinded, Paul went on to quote Psalm 69:22,23 to further explain Israel's blindness:

“And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

“Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see...” (Rom. 11:9,10).

The “table” in Scripture represented abundant food and blessing, and in Old Testament times, Israel was the only nation sitting at God's table, where they had grown “fat” with the blessing of God (Deut. 32:15). Back then they were made fat with the material things they inherited from the nations they evicted from the promised land (Deut. 6:10,11), and Moses warned them not to allow these blessings to become a snare and a trap to them (v. 12).

In addition to these *material* blessings, the nation was also showered with many *spiritual* blessings, for to Israel also pertained “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,” not to mention “the fathers” (Rom. 9:4,5). In our Lord's day, Israel was further fattened with the greatest blessing imaginable, for of them “as concerning the flesh Christ came” (v. 5).

But the Apostle Paul affirmed that, to the unbelieving heart, these table-blessings became a *snare*, and a *trap*, and the source of their spiritual blindness, for they

had to close their eyes to the truth to keep from believing it. It was a blessing to Israel for God to lay the Cornerstone of the kingdom church right in their path, but when they refused to believe on Him, the Cornerstone became a “stumblingblock” (Rom. 11:9).

A Helpful Principle

Now that we understand how God blinded the eyes of the Jews “and hardened their heart” (John 12:40), this principle will help us understand some other passages of Scripture that seem to challenge the character and justice of God, such as those that deal with the hardening of *Pharaoh's* heart. Typical of these is the one we find in Exodus 9:12:

“And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.”



“This then is how God blinded the Jews...”

There is no question that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, for this is what the Bible says on a number of occasions (Ex. 4:21; 7:3,13; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8). And just like the verses that speak about God blinding people, these verses have also troubled the hearts of God's people down through the centuries.

But let's pause here to consider *how* God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Did He harden his heart by not making it clear what He wanted Pharaoh to do? Surely not! What part of "Let My people go" could he have possibly misunderstood (Ex. 5:1)? Did God harden his heart by not allowing him to see miracles that proved that He was God? Again, the answer is *surely not!* By the hand of Moses, He performed one miracle after another, any one of which could just as easily have *softened* Pharaoh's heart.

So why did the miraculous plagues and their successive respite instead lead to the *hardening* of his heart? The answer lies in all of the verses that testify that in response to the miracles God worked before his eyes, *Pharaoh hardened his own heart*, instead of allowing it to be softened toward God (Ex. 8:15,32; 9:34). The king's heart would simply not allow him to believe that the God of his slaves was greater than all of his gods. You see, in his day it was generally believed that if one nation was able to conquer another nation it was because their gods were greater and stronger than the gods of the nation they vanquished (II Kings 18:33-35; 19:12; II Chron. 32:14). In Pharaoh's mind, the fact that his nation had enslaved Israel meant that his gods were greater than theirs.

The miraculous plagues that God then sent to convince Pharaoh otherwise were specifically designed to embarrass his many gods. We are told, for example, that the Egyptians worshipped "the god of the Nile," since this

ancient river was their source of water, and water in that desert land was the source of life itself. When Moses turned the Nile into blood, it clearly demonstrated that his God was greater than this particular Egyptian god. We also understand that the Egyptians worshipped "the god of the sun," so when God caused darkness that could be felt to envelope their land, this too demonstrated that He was greater than the gods of the Egyptians. If what we read about their gods is true, then each of the ten miraculous plagues that God sent upon them was designed to embarrass their gods and could just as easily have softened the heart of Pharaoh.



But as you know, the same sun that melts the butter hardens the clay. This classic illustration reminds us that the same gospel that melts the heart of one man hardens the heart of the man who refuses to believe it. And so it was that Pharaoh chose to harden his heart in response to these repeated evidences of the power of the God of Israel. *This* is how God hardened his heart, and this is how God blinded the minds of the Jews in our Lord's day.

Blindness and Hardness

These concepts of blinding and hardening meet together in an interesting verse in Paul's epistles, where the apostle describes unbelievers as

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18).

The Greek word for “blindness” here is *porosis*, a word which is also translated “hardness” (Mark 3:5). If you are wondering how the same word could have both meanings, consider that even today the English definition of the word *porosis* is “the formation of the callus in repair of a fractured bone.”¹ The *calluses* with which most of us are familiar are the *hard*, thick layers of skin that are caused by repeated pressure or friction. This writer spent twenty years as a painting contractor, and we have what is called a “painter’s thumb,” a callus on the inside of the right thumb, developed after many years of gripping a paint brush. God designed our bodies to naturally protect our skin from repeated pressure or friction by building up such thick, hard layers of skin.

We don’t normally think of *eyes* getting callused, but cataracts are caused by a progressive hardening of the lens of the eye. Doctors don’t know why they develop, but we wonder if they aren’t the body’s way of protecting the eye. It is known that over-exposure to sunlight can cause cataracts, and that airline pilots run a higher risk of developing them due to

their exposure to cosmic radiation. All of this might explain why the Greek word for *blindness* here is a word that also conveys the idea of *hardness*.

Spiritually speaking, when unbelievers see the light of the gospel and refuse to believe it, they must begin to develop layers of unbelief to protect their willful hearts from repeated exposure to the gospel, which creates pressure on them to believe, and friction that rubs them the wrong way. In the same way, with each successive miracle shown to Pharaoh, the king had to harden his heart a little bit more to guard it from believing on the God of Israel. Before long he had developed a protective callus of unbelief on his heart.



It is interesting that calluses also have a diminished sensitivity to feeling, for after speaking of the blindness of the unbeliever’s heart, Paul adds,

“Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19).

A heart that is hardened against the gospel and the things of God is long past feeling the twinge of conscience that the Bible describes as being *pricked in the heart* (Acts 2:37). And while *receiving* the

gospel can lead to hardening one's resolve *against* lasciviousness and uncleanness, the hardened heart that *rejects* the gospel is often softened *toward* these and other sins, as Paul points out here.

Guilty as Charged, but Guiltless

As we consider these things, we see that the character and justice of God are maintained in the way that He hardened and blinded the Jews in our Lord's day. They will have no excuse on Judgment Day, for after seeing the miracles that the Lord performed, even an unbeliever would know how foolish it would sound in that day to say, "It's not fair. You blinded me by performing too many miracles, to which I chose to close my eyes in unbelief."



Here we should mention that unbelievers in *any* dispensation are similarly "without excuse,"

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even

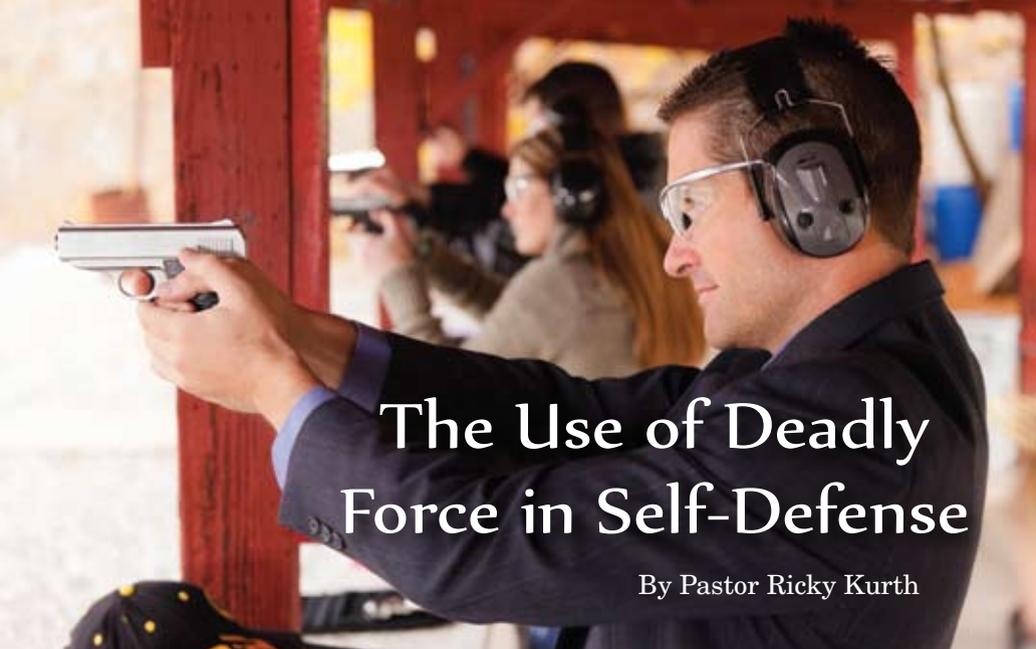
His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19,20).

Among "the things that are made" that provide indisputable testimony to the existence of God are the stars, which "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Psa. 19:1,2). Since "there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (v. 3), all men everywhere are without excuse. The miracle of creation can either cause the unbeliever to bow to God or else it will cause him to harden his heart as he chooses to close his eyes to the light of His testimony.

The practical ramifications of this study cannot be overestimated. Countless believers down through the centuries have been deeply troubled by the verses that say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and blinded the Jews in our Lord's day. In addition, in such verses atheists have found ammunition to use in their war against the God of the Bible, claiming that He is a monster who prevented people from believing and then condemned them to the eternal flames of hell for not believing. If nothing else, we trust that these thoughts have reinforced your conviction that in any dispensation God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), and that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). 

Endnote

1. See *The Free Dictionary* online.



The Use of Deadly Force in Self-Defense

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

Recently someone wrote us here at *Berean Bible Society* to ask, “Is it wrong to kill someone in self defense?” As the days around us grow darker, this is a question that more and more of God’s people are asking. This question looms even larger when we consider that some are predicting a post-election economic collapse that might result in anarchy and chaos in our streets. Even if this never comes to pass, we need to ask ourselves what God would have us do if confronted with a life-threatening situation, or if the lives of our loved ones were to be similarly endangered. Surely the time to determine God’s will in such a situation is now, not then.

Let’s begin with some advice that the Lord Jesus gave in the very shadow of the cross, when the days ahead were looking dark indeed:

“...he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one” (Luke 22:36).

A sword is an instrument of self-defense. It is not used in hunting; its only purpose is to take human life, making it the ancient equivalent of the modern handgun. In Bible days, it was the weapon of choice of the police and military (Rom. 13:1-4) and, just before He died, the Lord Jesus Christ recommended that His followers obtain one, *even if they had to sell their garments to do so*. You see, by that time He knew that the kingdom in which He advised men to turn the other cheek had been rejected by the people of Israel, and that His followers would need to be able to defend themselves in the dark days that the prophets predicted would follow His crucifixion.

Here you might be thinking, “But didn’t the Lord *also* say that ‘all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword’ (Matt. 26:52)?”

This famous quotation is often used in opposition to the idea of owning a firearm, but either the Lord is contradicting His advice to buy a sword here, or else He has something else in mind in the context. We feel the latter is the case, of course, so let's consider the circumstances in which the Lord advised against taking the sword.

The night that He issued this advice, the authorities had come to arrest the Lord, and one of His followers¹ sought to defend Him with a sword (Matt. 26:47-52). Although the Lord was being arrested on trumped-up charges and would later be tried by a kangaroo court, the authorities were still the authorities, and resisting them is outside of the will of God in any dispensation. In restraining Peter from taking the sword against them, the Lord was teaching us that the government is to be obeyed by God's people *even when they act contrary to the law* (Acts 23:1-5).² Had Peter succeeded in removing the head of the high priest's servant and not just his ear when the man ducked sideways to avoid the slash, Peter's blood would have had to be shed for wrongfully shedding the blood of another (Ex. 22:28 cf. Gen. 9:6). This Old Testament ordinance was given as the ultimate expression of the power that God granted human government in the earliest days of civilization, and it has never been repealed.

The Lord had more to say about self-defense in Luke 11:21:

“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.”

Here the Lord authorized the use of arms in defense of one's property as well as in defense of one's self and one's family. While the Lord was making a spiritual application from this principle, it is important to notice that He does not condemn the principle of defending one's goods. Being a Man of the Book, we feel He had Exodus 22:2 in mind:

“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.”

Here we see that there are exceptions to the rule of Genesis 9:6. If you shed the blood of an intruder in your home, by the law of God your blood must not be shed to pay for his. If you are wondering why God would not condemn the use of deadly force in defense of mere material possessions, there are a couple of things to keep in mind.

First, it should be remembered that the motives of an uninvited man, found unexpectedly in your home in the middle of the night, are known only to him. You yourself have no way of knowing if he is there merely to steal your possessions, or to kill you and rape or harm the loved ones whom you are bound by God to protect as the head of your home. If we men are to love our wives “as Christ also loved the church, *and gave Himself for it*” (Eph. 5:25), we must be willing to give our lives in their defense. In addition, although the provision that Paul mentions in I Timothy 5:8 speaks primarily of financial things, we believe that a legitimate extrapolation can be made here to extend

the meaning of this verse to include the provision of protection from any and all dangers as well.

Secondly, it should also be remembered that, in those days, a man's life savings were more likely to be found in his home than in a bank, and so to rob his home robbed his family of the stable future for which they had worked together and sacrificed to attain. These reasons, and perhaps others, might be why God sanctions the taking of a human life in such a situation.

But what about the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13)? While often raised as an objection against the use of deadly force in self-defense, this commandment, like all other verses of Scripture, must be viewed in light of the context of the Word of God as a whole. We know that this verse cannot be a blanket condemnation of all taking of human life since the Bible also authorizes capital punishment (Ex. 21:12). Even our apostle Paul recognized the government's right to take his life if he were guilty of a capital offense (Acts 25:11), and so we know that the principle of capital punishment is still in effect during the dispensation of grace. So when the Bible also says "thou shalt not kill," we must either conclude that the Bible is a hopeless mess of contradictions, or else that God sees a clear difference between the cold-blooded murder of an innocent person and the orderly execution of cold-blooded murderers. We believe that this latter explanation is the correct way to understand these seemingly contradictory Bible positions.



"But what about the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' (Ex. 20:13)?"

War is another area where the taking of human life is legitimate in the eyes of God. When the soldiers asked John the Baptist, "And what shall we do?" it is true that John advised them to "do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14). However, these instructions must be considered in light of the fact that he did not insist that these soldiers quit being soldiers.³ This means that the *violence* in which he forbade them to engage must have had to do with some sort of *illegal* violence. The Greek word for *violence* here has the idea of *shaking*, and just might be the idea behind our modern word *shakedown*, the illegal use of power or authority to extort money from people. The rest of John's words here would suggest that this is what he had in mind, as he went on to tell them to "be content with your wages."

We know from Ezekiel 45:9 that the orderly execution of judgment and justice by soldiers in the line of duty is not considered violence, for here God says to "remove violence" by *engaging in the execution of*

judgment and justice. In addition, David said, “Blessed be the Lord my strength, *which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*” (Psa. 144:1). Clearly, the taking of human life in times of war cannot be a sin if God Himself taught David how to be good at it.

Here’s something else to consider. After Haman tricked Ahasuerus into ordering the extermination of the Jewish people, the king later countermanded his original order when he “granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to *destroy*, to *slay*, and to *cause to perish*, all the power of the people and province that would assault them” (Esther 8:11). God’s people then proceeded to execute this royal decree on any and all who posed a threat to their lives (9:1-16). These acts of self-defense were not censured by God in any way; indeed, they are clearly the end result of the providential working of God in the book of Esther, as the Almighty worked behind the scenes to save His people from extinction.

It is clear then that God’s command of “thou shalt not kill” must be considered in light of His other clear commands that authorize the taking of human life for good and righteous reasons, such as the defense of one’s country and people, and the defense of one’s loved ones. While the taking of a human life is a grave and serious matter, we feel that the Bible’s position is that anyone who poses a threat to innocent life must be prevented from taking such life by any means possible. Some might argue that, since we go to be with the Lord when we die, a Christian shouldn’t resist an attempt on his life. But if Christians can serve as “God’s ministers” in the military and in law enforcement (Rom. 13:4-6), protecting the lives of others, it would be logical to conclude that a Christian should provide the same protection for his own, especially for those of his own house.

The practical ramifications of this principle are many, but it might be helpful to point out at least one, in the light of the recent (July 20, 2012) mass shooting in Denver, the deadliest our nation has ever seen. The death toll in this horrific shooting would not have been nearly as high if even a few of those present had been armed and trained in the use of the arms that the Lord Jesus instructed believers to obtain. In the midst of an armed citizenry, that particular gunman might have gotten off a shot or two, but his first shot would have sent responsible gun owners reaching for their own weapons, and the killer would then have been prevented from snuffing out one innocent life after another, as easily as shooting fish in a barrel.

It is interesting that, in the week following that shooting, applications to carry a firearm went up markedly in the Denver area. We would suggest that God’s people similarly go through the proper channels to legally obtain a firearm, and then seek proper training in its use, so as to be instructed (like David) how to defend the people of God whose lives have been entrusted to our care. If you just can’t bring yourself to purchase a firearm, or if you are unwilling to take the time

to receive the training that is needed to become a safe and responsible gun-owner, we would suggest you look into a taser or pepper spray or some similar weapon that would not leave you defenseless in a life-threatening situation.

In closing, we understand that there are very strong feelings on both sides of this volatile issue. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones due to gun violence, for this writer has suffered a similar loss. If your loss has prompted you to adopt a position contrary to that which we have presented here, we want you to know that it is not our intent to try to dissuade you from your position. Our only wish is to offer Biblical counsel to those who yearn to understand the will of God in this critical and very practical area of life. 

Endnotes

1. A man identified as Peter in John 18:10.
2. While we lament when our own government here in the United States does not follow the Constitution, the supreme law of our land, God's people are still obliged to obey them, if they want to follow Paul as he followed Christ (Acts 23:1-5 cf. I Cor. 11:1).
3. If John meant for them to quit being soldiers, he would not have gone on to tell them, in the very same verse, to "be content with your wages."



A COUNTRY FUNERAL

“As a young minister, I was asked by a funeral director to hold a grave-side service for a homeless man with no family or friends. The funeral was to be held at a cemetery way back in the country, and this man would be the first to be laid to rest there. As I was not familiar with the backwoods area, I became lost, and being a typical man, did not stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late.

“I saw the backhoe and the work crew, who were eating lunch, but the hearse was nowhere in sight. I apologized to the workers for my tardiness, stepped to the side of the open grave and saw that the vault lid was already in place. I assured the workers I would not hold them up for long, but this was the proper thing to do.

“The workers gathered around, still eating their lunches. I poured out my heart and soul. As I preached, the workers began to say, ‘Amen,’ ‘Praise the Lord,’ and ‘Glory!’ I preached and I preached like I’d never preached before, from Genesis all the way to Revelation. I closed the lengthy service with a prayer and walked to my car. As I was opening the door and taking off my coat, I overheard one of the workers saying to another, ‘I ain’t never seen anything like that before, and I’ve been putting in septic tanks for twenty years.’”

The name of this pastor is unknown. I wonder why! At least he's honest!

Imitators

By Pastor
John Fredericksen



A few weeks ago, when our grandson was about 27 months old, we noticed him doing something incredibly cute. He had put on his daddy's flip-flops (a size 12) and was proudly walking around the room with a big smile on his face. He has become a great, natural imitator of what he hears us say and sees us doing. This got me to thinking that even we adults usually imitate someone.

Once Israel was in their promised land, "the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; *that we also may be like all the nations...*" (I Sam. 8:19-20). This was an unwise decision on the part of Israel. God had been governing them through a series of judges who represented the Lord. These judges certainly were not perfect, but this had been God's design. Jehovah's response to their virtual demand to Samuel to give them a king was, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (I Sam. 8:7).

This pattern of imitating the world later worsened. "They rejected His [the Lord's] statutes, and His covenant...and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that *they should not do like them*" (II Kings 17:15). Throughout the Old Testament, God's people frequently became too close and familiar with the lost people around them. In the case of Lot, he first pitched his tent toward Sodom but before long he was living within the city and had completely lost his testimony. In other instances, Israel made treaties with the heathen nations, began to intermarry with them, and in short order began to worship their false gods. They were imitating the wrong things and the wrong people.

This same danger is still entrapping many believers in our day. Far too often, we are unduly influenced by the way the lost in our society talk, dress, think, and by what they embrace as acceptable, even when these things are clearly displeasing to the Lord. We believers are too often caught in the trap of being overly occupied with sports, recreation, leisure time, and hobbies to the neglect of spiritual things and the Lord's local work. The Lord has something far better in mind for us, and someone far better to imitate.

The Lord tells us in Romans 12:2: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” *As believers, our lives are to be so transformed that there is a marked difference between us and the unsaved.* Our standard ought not to be what the world is doing, or what the latest fad dictates. Our standard should be what would please and honor the Lord. There is no virtue in being weird, strange, or odd. These things do not enhance our testimony or effectiveness as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, we believers should be different from the world in many ways.

Believers do have someone they should be imitating. We should “mark them [godly believers] which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. 3:17). Godly, knowledgeable Christians who followed Paul as he followed Christ and are fervent in their walk with Christ are the ones we should imitate. 

Question Box

“What is the difference between joy and happiness in the Christian life? Thanks!”

It is important to distinguish between joy and happiness, for they are not one and the same. *Joy* is the fruit of our relationship with Christ, while *happiness* is always a result of our circumstances, those good things that happen. When you receive a promotion for work well done, you are ecstatic or *happy!* Two years later, when the company downsizes and you have to find a new job, you suddenly find yourself devastated or *unhappy.* Happiness is as changeable as the weather!

Believers in Christ, however, can have *joy* in spite of the circumstances. The Apostle Paul is a good example of this very thing. He was sitting in a Roman prison cell, facing death, and there were those who were envious of him who hoped to add affliction to his bonds. Yet, in spite of this, he *rejoiced.* Thus the apostle could confidently write, “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all” (Phil. 2:17). We can *choose* either to wallow in our own self-pity or *rejoice* in whatever state we may find ourselves. You see, joy flows from our confidence in God, that He is working all things out according to the counsel of His will.

—Pastor Sadler



BBS Letter Excerpts

From Australia:

“We thank you for your ministry, as there is no church we have been able to attend in our local area and farther afield. We have tried them all over the years! And we have seen the decline set in, and people’s lives upturned because of the misuse of Scripture.”

From Texas:

“I feel so blessed to be enlightened to rightly dividing the Word of truth. Are there any grace churches in my local area? I am increasingly aware of how my church is teaching wrong doctrine.”

From Tennessee:

“We love the *Berean Searchlight*, especially after moving to Tennessee. We haven’t been able to find a grace church in the area where we live. We are currently using the *Searchlight* for our family Bible study.”

From our Inbox:

“Thank you so much for the *Berean Searchlight*! There is no church in our area that is dispensational or Pauline in its teaching.”

From Wisconsin:

“We are stranded grace believers. We miss the fellowship of like believers. The *Searchlight* is a real help.”

From South Carolina:

“Thank you for your MP3 audio Bible studies, Pastor Sadler, especially the ones on Christian Marriage.”

From Indiana:

“I would like Volume 1 of *Revelation*. I love your books; they are very informative, and Scriptural, they almost read like a novel.” (That’s not surprising, *Revelation* describes the drama of the end times!—Ed).

From Florida:

“I want to thank you for your book on *Revelation*. When you finish, I want to purchase at least a half dozen of these books.”

From Washington:

“Bro. Paul—I just finished your book, *The Triumph of His Grace*; it was such a blessing! We’re sure waiting and looking for that great day when we shall be caught up in the clouds where our Savior is waiting for us to take us to heaven...We pray—hasten the day, dear Lord! Amen!”

From our Inbox:

“Brother Stam answers questions that the reader never thought to ask! I will share this little book with everyone!”

From Indiana:

“It seems my husband and I began to live happier, fuller lives once the grace message was understood by both of us. And by ‘us’ I mean, I wrestled at times because of my past indoctrination, but it’s all but behind me. The old doctrine made you question your every move of the day, if you doubted it in the least. Eh! I’m done with that!”

From Montana:

“I thoroughly appreciate ‘The Impatience of Job.’ When I was going through a difficult time, it clearly pointed out what I had taken for granted, and it is the most *precious* gift: full access to our loving Father through our Lord Jesus *anytime*, and the BOOK He so graciously gave us to know Him and to stay rooted within, not uprooted in the trials of life! This article affected me deeply. I had never seen this in the book of Job this way and it was an incredible understanding that I took in, and now treasure my relationship with the Lord and His Word threefold more.”

From Wisconsin:

“Thank you for the article ‘Is Israel Really Back in the Land?’ Some experienced believers do believe they are, but Pastor Kurth has explained well that this is the future coming kingdom.”

From Colorado:

“The literature you so graciously provide me has two purposes. First, and of a premier importance, it adds to my knowledge of the Bible, for which I thank you. Second, when I finish studying the literature, I pass it on.” (That’s Scriptural. We often read, “It came to pass...” LOL.—Ed.)

From Oregon:

“I am so looking forward to the *Berean Searchlight*. I bought your *Two Minutes with the Bible* and love it so, I want more to help me learn and understand the Bible.”

From our Inbox:

“I appreciate your comments. They are very helpful to my understanding of this passage.”

From our Inbox:

“As a recent ‘finder’ of your website, I must thank you for your wonderful work. I ordered and read Paul Sadler’s book *Revelation—Volume One* and I eagerly look forward to the next three volumes....Currently, I am reading Mr. Stam’s *Acts, Dispensationally Considered* and find it to be a real blessing. It amazes me that, once you see things rightly divided, everything just seems to fall into place. I teach an adult Sunday school class and incorporate this thinking into our lessons, since we have been covering Paul’s epistles, and it really helps eliminate confusion.”

From South Carolina:

“I am reading Pastor Sadler’s book on Peter’s epistles again and enjoying it. It gives me great consolation just to have brothers that can explain what I don’t understand...I am enclosing a little extra this month (part of my severance package) to help in the fight.”

From Ohio:

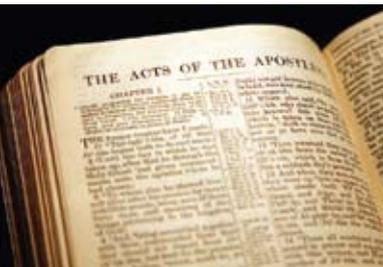
“The *Searchlight* is so, so beautiful—both physically and spiritually!” (Kevin Sadler always makes it look good!—Ed.)

From Indiana:

“I’m studying this issue and finding it very fascinating, as I do all of the Bible now that I have been taught how to rightly divide the message and know the mystery...it has made all the difference in my life.”

From Facebook:

“It is really challenging when everyone around you does not see the division in God’s Word. They think you are a heretic. Lord help us to declare it fearlessly!”



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

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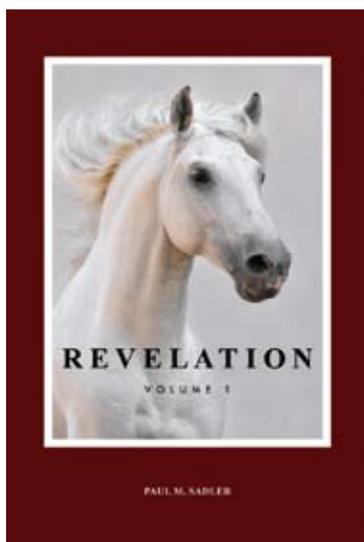
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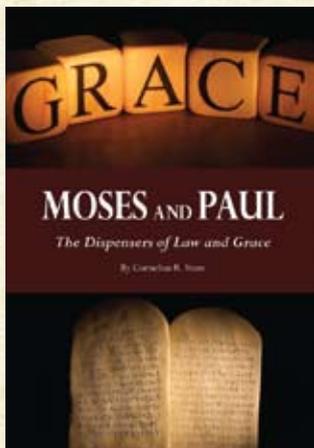
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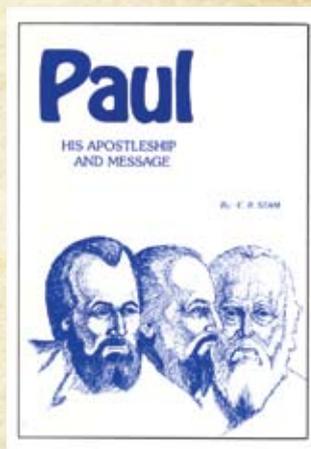
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This work was written to show from the Scriptures that God raised up Paul to be both the herald and the living demonstration of His grace to a doomed world.

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News and Announcements

'Tis the Season to stock up on grace literature for holiday gift giving and gospel tracts for season's greeting cards! We offer a 20% discount on any order of 25 or more of Pastor Stam's booklets of the same title. Former *Berean Bible Fellowship* president, Pastor Win Johnson, learned the grace message when someone handed him a copy of *Unanswered Prayer*. What future grace leader is waiting for you to share the message with him?

When it comes to sharing the grace message there's just something about a chart that helps believers see the Mystery and other Pauline distinctions. In addition to our timeline chart, *The Key to Understanding the Scriptures*, and our *According to the Scriptures* that you can order through our online bookstore, you can download several color charts free of charge from our website at www.bereanbiblesociety.org/charts/.

Hitches and Glitches: BBS Webmaster Richard Church has been quietly redesigning our website, and as Benjamin Franklin once observed, "There are no gains without pains." Technical difficulties have been coming and going and have had Richard busier than a banana salesman at a monkey convention. We appreciate your patience while we work through these things, and we hope that by the time you read these words our website will be running more smoothly than ever before!

It's Not Too Early to begin planning the Bible conference or special meetings that you've been talking about holding at your church in 2013. We here at BBS are available for a limited number of speaking engagements, and we are already booking dates for the new year. If you are looking for a way to generate interest in the grace message in your area, why not consider booking a conference room at a local hotel and lining up a speaker? Bible conferences are also a great way to revitalize the saints in local grace assemblies, and rekindle their interest in studying God's Word. We can help by advertising your venture in the *Searchlight*, but plans and preparations must be made early to be effective.



This month's cover features *The Tower of Hercules* in A Coruña, which overlooks the North Atlantic coast of Spain. Rehabilitated in 1791, this 1900-year-old structure is the oldest Roman light still in use. Rob van der Zee sent us this Archivo da Coruña (Tourism Archive of A Coruña) photo to use with their permission.

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“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6,7).