

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2013



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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 the Christian life, and to encourage the local church.

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From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recently we received an email asking about the first entry in the Letter Excerpts in the September *Searchlight*. You know, the one that said, “There is a reason why 99.9% of Bible-believing Christians don’t agree with you.... There is no special gospel revealed to Paul!” The email asked why we would print such a negative comment. If you found this puzzling as well, perhaps a word of explanation is in order.

In March of 1948, *Berean Bible Society* founder Pastor C. R. Stam first began publishing excerpts from letters that he received from readers of the *Searchlight*, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Of course! Then, as now, grace believers are always delighted to hear how others are coming to rejoice with them in the riches of God’s grace. However, Pastor Stam was wise enough to know that grace believers need to be *challenged* as well as delighted. So in the very next issue he published two excerpts from people who disagreed with our doctrinal position, and many more in the years that followed.

In so doing, we believe Pastor Stam was thinking of the Apostle Paul’s visit to the synagogue in Antioch, where they “spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming” (Acts 13:45). It was “then” that Paul and Barnabas “waxed bold” (v. 46), and not before. There’s just something about opposition to the truth that stirs the heart of those who proclaim it! And so it is that when I receive a letter from someone who disagrees with Paul’s gospel—especially from someone who is “contradicting and blaspheming”—I purposely save that email for last. Nothing gets my blood pumping like opposition to the truth, so no matter how sleepy I am at the end of the day, I can still spend a productive hour capitalizing on the energy that such opposition always affords me!

After witnessing a spirited exchange of emails with one such opponent of the truth, Kevin Sadler reminded me that we had gotten away from publishing excerpts from such letters since I became editor of the *Searchlight*. As I remembered how excerpts like these always stirred my spirit in the past, I determined to get back to quoting such negative remarks, for they remind us that we are in a *battle* for the truth of God’s rightly divided Word. I hope that opposition comments like these will likewise stir in you the kind of boldness that such resistance awakened in Paul, and that you’ll join him in the battle for “the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.”

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Ricky Kurth





“Objects in the Mirror...

OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER
THAN THEY APPEAR

...are closer than they appear.” That’s the warning you see on the passenger-side mirror of your car. The convexity of the mirror gives you a more panoramic rear view, but it also makes the cars behind you look smaller, and further away than they actually are. This can give the illusion that there is room to change lanes, when the truth is that the driver in the adjacent lane may have to hit the brakes if you do—and the horn!

This mirror warning always reminds me of God’s words to Ezekiel:

“Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off” (Ezek. 12:27).

You’ll notice that the problem wasn’t that God’s people doubted that Ezekiel’s prophecies would come true; they just didn’t think they would come true *for a long time*. And you know, God’s people today are no different. When we read Paul’s predictions about the Rapture (I Thes. 4:13-18) and the Judgment Seat of Christ that will follow (Rom. 14:10), we believe these things will happen, but we tend to think they are a long way off. This can lead to complacency in serving the Lord, just as it did in Ezekiel’s day. Thus we would do well to read God’s response:

“Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of My words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done...” (Ezek. 12:28).

While we cannot say that the Rapture will be prolonged no longer, we can say with equal assurance that the word which God has spoken *to us* shall be done. The panoramic view that the mirror of God’s Word affords us (James 1:22-24) allows us to see everything that is *ahead* of us, and these things are closer than they appear! If you are not living for the Lord, “boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). The Rapture may come today, and you may find yourself standing before your Lord and Judge this evening. Why not heed Paul’s admonition,

“...knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:11,12).

—Pastor Ricky Kurth



ALL Spiritual Blessings

By Pastor Ken Lawson

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

One of the most interesting publications that I have read recently was a book in which some prominent pastors were chosen to write a chapter expounding the Bible verse which they believed most influenced their life and ministry. If I were ever chosen to write such a chapter, it would most assuredly be on the above text, mainly because of its life-changing potential. Here we have a verse which too many people skim over rather lightly to get to the “meat” of the Apostle Paul’s great letter to the Ephesians. In so doing, they deprive themselves of a verse which, if properly understood, would revolutionize their thinking on the Christian life.

It has long been recognized by spiritual minds that the Book of Ephesians unfolds God’s highest and deepest truth for the Church which is His Body. In chapter 1, Paul explains to believers their wealth in Christ. Without a knowledge of their position and possessions in Him, Paul knew that they would be “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). Paul desired not only that they receive the gift of eternal life, but also that they grow up into Christ (4:15) and become the mature saints our Lord intended them to be. And so it is with us. Ephesians 1:3 forms the foundation for the rest of the chapter which, in turn, forms the basis for the doctrinal and practical portions which follow. In short, our text is the hub of the entire letter to the Ephesians.

Prayerful meditation on this verse will answer five questions which are crucial to our understanding of God’s working in this present dispensation of grace and of our growth in godliness.

1) What kind of blessings has God given us?

Answer: Spiritual.

A *blessing* in this context refers to a benefit by which the receiver is enlarged and enriched.

The word *spiritual* comes from the Greek word *pneumatikos*, meaning in the spirit realm, and connotes the idea of invisibility and of power (Vine’s). Of the 25 occurrences of this word in the Word of God, only two are found outside of Paul’s writings. As the chief apostle of the circumcision, Peter writes to Jewish saints of the dispersion to remind them that they, as living stones, are built up into a **spiritual** house (as opposed to the physical house of Jerusalem’s temple), and offer up **spiritual** sacrifices (as opposed to physical, animal sacrifices) (I Pet. 2:5). Scripture identifies these sacrifices as praise to God, giving of thanks to His name, doing good and sharing with others (Heb. 13:15,16).

Likewise, Paul uses the word *spiritual* in contrast to that which is carnal, fleshly, and material (Rom. 7:14; I Cor. 3:1; 9:11; 10:3,4). We must not assume, however, that because something is spiritual it is any less real or that it does not affect the material world. On the contrary, the future, glorified bodies of all believers in Christ will be spiritual as opposed to natural (soulish). We know that they will not be spirits or apparitions as some denominations teach, because the word *body* (Gr. *soma*) is used and denotes physical substance. Also, Paul reveals to us that, when Christ comes, He shall “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). Since Christ appeared physically numerous times after His resurrection, so our future, glorified body will be physical, celestial (fitted for life in the heavenly places), and spiritual (suited for life in the spirit realm) (I Cor. 15:40,44). It is interesting to me to see that our Lord uses the terms “earthly” and “heavenly” with Nicodemus rather than “fleshly” and “spiritual” (John 3:12), possibly because the Spirit was not yet given (John 7:39). Paul is the primary revealer of the spiritual.

Now someone may ask, “So what are spiritual blessings?” The context of Ephesians 1:4-14 gives us at least seven examples in three categories:

The Will of the Father—God has...

- *Chosen* (elected) us in Him (v. 4)
- *Predestinated* us unto the adoption of sons (v. 5)
- *Accepted* us in the Beloved (One) (v. 6)

The Work of the Son—We have...

- *Redemption* through His blood, the *forgiveness* of sins (v. 7)
- *Knowledge of the mystery* of His will (secret of His plan) through Paul's revelation (v. 9)
- *An inheritance* (v. 11)

The Witness of the Spirit—He has...

- *Sealed* us with the Holy Spirit (v. 13)

This list of spiritual blessings, while substantial, is not exhaustive, for students of the Bible have found many, many more. Notice the spiritual character of these blessings. They cannot be perceived by our five senses. They are not apprehended by natural means. The only way we know about them is by reading about them in the Bible. The Spirit of God illuminates the Word of God to the believer who knows that God is faithful and is able to perform that which He has promised. Only by the eye of faith can we see the spiritual things that are freely given to us by God.

It is informative for us to compare and contrast our spiritual blessings with Israel's physical blessings under the Old Covenant of the Law. Moses, moved by the Holy Spirit, listed numerous blessings that awaited Israel when they entered the promised land under Joshua (Deut. 28:1-14):

Abundance of children (v. 4)

Successful harvest (v. 4)

Growth of livestock (v. 4)

Victory over Israel's enemies
(v. 7)

Rain to the land in His season
(v. 12)

Israel to be the wealthiest of nations (v. 12)

Israel to be the head over all nations (v. 13)



Notice the physical character of these blessings. Not only were they material and experienced by the body, they were also conditional in respect to their obedience to the Law (Deut. 28:1,9,13). Rebellion and disobedience would cause God to turn their blessings into terrible curses (Deut. 28:15-68).

Believers today are members of the Church, the Body of Christ, and should not attempt to appropriate the promises and blessings which belong to the commonwealth of Israel. If you, as a believer in Christ, have been entrusted with a good measure of this world's goods, thank God for it. Use it wisely for His glory and man's good, for He has not promised it to you!

2) How many spiritual blessings do we have?

Answer: All of them.

As difficult as it is for some people to believe, God has not withheld anything beneficial to our spiritual life. Just as wealthy grandparents wish to provide only the best for their grandchildren, so God the Father delights to lavish upon us the exceeding riches of His grace. Eternity will seem far too short to learn and enjoy the extravagance with which God has bestowed His spiritual blessings.

3) Where are these spiritual blessings located?

Answer: In the heavenly places in Christ.

The term “heavenly places” (used five times in Ephesians) explains for us the present location of Jesus Christ in His exalted position, far above all (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10). It also describes the seats of authority of the evil principalities and powers (fallen angels) with which God calls us to do spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12).

By faith, the children of Israel defeated giants who inhabited the land of promise, so we, the members of the Body of Christ, should occupy by faith our inheritance in heavenly places. The rulers of the darkness of this world do not like us treading on the territory which they have staked out for themselves. Above all, they wish to deceive, distract, or discourage believers from possessing that God-given heritage. Our resource in this spiritual conflict is He who is the Head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10). That is why God has provided the spiritual armor which is sufficient for any attack of the adversary (Eph. 6:10-18).

The companion term to “in heavenly places” is the term “in Christ.” This phrase depicts our position as being made one with Him through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit of God (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4,5; 2:6). This standing, being perfect and unalterable, assures us that our spiritual blessings are also positional and secure. Christ, the fountain from whom all blessings flow, has reckoned us dead to the world and our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). Remember, when God hides something in Himself, no one can find it. Therefore, He will never be robbed of His blood-bought inheritance in us. Hallelujah!

4) When were we blessed?

Answer: When we received the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior.

Since all of our spiritual blessings are vested in Christ, we need only to answer the question, “When did we get to be in Christ?” Was it not when we believed the gospel? The verse says, “the Lord Jesus Christ...**hath** blessed us,” so the reception of all those blessings is past tense for the believer. The newborn babe in Christ is just as rich in Him as the oldest and most venerable saint. We will not attain to any

spiritual blessings now or in the life to come which we did not receive the very moment we believed. Radical theology!

Can such a concept really be true? To answer, we point back to our text. If we could acquire more spiritual blessings by our performance, devotion, or faithfulness, then our verse would not be true, for it says God has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.¹ Let God be true and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4).



“The newborn babe in Christ is just as rich in Him as the oldest...saint.”

I believe the difficulty we have in grasping this truth is directly related to an earlier question, “What is a spiritual blessing?” The term itself has been subjected to the most loose and careless usage among believers. How many times have we attended a preaching service or Bible study that was especially good and exclaimed, “My, what spiritual blessing we received today!” Such language, while common among Christians, subtly takes our spiritual blessings out of our standing in Christ and treats them as though they are conditional or a part of our changing state. This is a common

example of how people unknowingly take Bible words or phrases and superimpose on them a meaning foreign to Scripture. This can only mar and cloud the true intent of God’s Word. A better way to have expressed the same idea would be to have said, “My, how we learned to appreciate and appropriate our spiritual blessing in Christ!” We don’t receive more spiritual blessing; we only learn more about them to enjoy them.

The practical benefit of this teaching should be apparent to all. Much energy and time is wasted in the ministry by sincere but uninstructed Christians in a vain attempt to attain to what God has already freely given them by grace. If Donald Trump died and left you his vast fortune, would you continue working to pay your grocery bill? Wouldn’t your first order of business be to call in his financial advisors to learn what you have? Once it dawns on us that God has made us heir of all things in Christ, we are set free to explore the unsearchable riches of Christ in Paul’s epistles. God can then use the gratitude produced thereby to motivate us to loving worship and service.

How much confusion and heartache the religious world has endured over the years regarding the doctrine of “the second blessing.” Simply stated, some Charismatic-Holiness groups teach that a baptism of the Holy Spirit is experienced after salvation, resulting in instant spirituality and in some cases eradication of the sin nature. Once

Ephesians 1:3 is understood, the believer sees that there cannot be a second blessing—only growth in grace and knowledge of the blessings received at conversion. There is no short cut to spirituality in this present dispensation of the grace of God. As someone aptly said, “We have all of the Holy Spirit that we will ever have, but He does not have all of us!” Only as we grow in the love of God through diligent Bible study and prayer can Christ’s image be formed in us (Phil. 1:9,10; Gal. 4:19; I Thes. 2:13).

5) Who gives and who receives the blessings?

Answer: God and believers in Jesus Christ, respectively.

God is the giver of all good things. If this is self-evident, why is man so slack to be thankful? “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). Writing to the proud Corinthians, Paul had to rebuke them by asking, “...what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst indeed receive it, why dost thou glory as if you had not received it?” Just as Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec, priest of the most high God and King of peace, even so the less is blessed of the better (Heb. 7:7). “Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For *of* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:35,36).

“We don’t receive more spiritual blessing; we only learn more about them...”



Spiritual blessing is bestowed only on believers in Jesus Christ. Our text tells us that God “hath blessed **us**.” The “us” in verse 3 refers back to whom Paul addressed the letter: to the Ephesian saints and faithful in Christ Jesus (v. 1). While it is true that the “Father... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45), the unbeliever is excluded from all *spiritual blessing*. This should be evident from Ephesians 2:11,12 alone. Paul brings his readers into remembrance of their past lives as unconverted Gentiles. “Wherefore remember...that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

If you are a searching soul who has condescended to read these few pages, and would like to get in on these spiritual blessings, may I remind you that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”

(Rom. 5:8,9). I invite you now to receive Christ as your personal Savior without delay. Only then may you sit at His table and enjoy a feast of all good things. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus....And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26,29).

Summary

What kind of blessings has God given us?

—Spiritual.

How many spiritual blessings do we have?

—All of them.

Where are these spiritual blessings located?

—In heavenly places in Christ.

When were we blessed with them?

—When we received Christ as Savior.

Who gives and who receives the blessings?

—God gives and believers in Jesus Christ receive.

Ephesians 1:3 has been shown to be much more than a grand ascription of praise from the apostle of the Gentiles. It has great doctrinal import. Let us use this key to unlock the inexhaustible treasures found in this short epistle. Then we may rejoice in God’s grace, mercy, and peace and “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that” we “might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). May we know His fullness both now and in the world to come. Amen. 

Endnote

1. Reward or loss of reward is not at issue here. All spiritual blessings are associated with our position in Christ. Reward for the Christian may be gained or lost depending on the degree of submissiveness to the will of God. Therefore, present and future reward does not properly fall under the designation of “all spiritual blessings in Christ” (cf. I Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27; Phil. 3:10-14; Col. 3:23-25).

Special Sunday Service

Date: Sunday, December 1, 2013

Location: *Kettle Moraine Bible Church*
204 S. 7th Avenue, West Bend, Wisconsin

Guest Speaker:

Pastor Paul M. Sadler, *Berean Bible Society*

For additional information, please contact:

Pastor Kevin Sadler at (262) 305-6860
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Lessons from the Past

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

PAUL THE TRAVELER

“And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band.”

—Acts 27:1

“People wrestle with God for one of two reasons:

1. They don’t know God’s will and are trying to find it.

2. They know God’s will and are trying to decide whether or not to do it.”¹

Very true! The Lord, as we know, had commissioned Paul to go to the ends of the earth to reach the Gentiles, but the desire of Paul’s heart was that Israel might be saved (Rom. 10:1). It seems as though he never forgave himself for persecuting the Kingdom Church and laying it waste (Acts 22:18-21). He reasoned that, if he could simply return again to Jerusalem, it would result in the conversion of his countrymen. But the Lord had *forewarned* him that

they would not receive his testimony concerning Him. Nevertheless, the apostle failed to heed the counsel of the Lord, believing he could reach them for Christ if given another opportunity (Acts 21:4-14). Since God never imposes His will upon ours, He *allowed* Paul to return to Jerusalem after repeated warnings not to do so.

The results were catastrophic. God had to interrupt the ill-advised plan of James, and Paul’s cooperation in it. We believe, had not the Lord *intervened*, the apostle would have lost his life at the hands of his countrymen (Acts 21:17-36).

The lesson here is clear: disobedience has consequences! While some tend to place Paul on a pedestal, he was not beyond stepping out of the will of God. He was a man of like passions as we; he, too, had feet of clay! This one act of disobedience cost him dearly. We know, for example, he was imprisoned at Caesarea for

two years as a result. These were lost years for the most part, years he could have ministered more effectively among the Gentiles. We can give thanks that God uses us in spite of our shortcomings and failures. Shortly after Paul was imprisoned, the Lord appeared to the apostle so that he wouldn't languish in despair.

“And the night following the Lord stood by 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 main clause, “Be of good cheer,” here is in the imperative mood. Essentially, the Lord *commands* Paul to be continuously courageous and confident, for the hand of God was still upon his ministry. Although the apostle had testified of the Lord under the permissive will of God at Jerusalem, it was still the directive will of God for him to continue his ministry among the Gentiles. Hence, “so must thou bear witness also at Rome”—at Rome’s expense, mind you. There are times when God uses the unbeliever to accomplish His purpose, as demonstrated here where He uses the Roman government to transport Paul to where He wants him. We find it of interest that, Roman custody notwithstanding, Paul is never said to be a prisoner of Rome, but rather a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1). The Lord makes Paul *His* prisoner at this point and sends him to Rome, a Gentile city *far* from Jerusalem.

Having been bound over for trial at Rome, Paul is put on a ship in the custody of a Roman centurion named Julius. There is

good reason to believe that they may have known one another prior to the voyage. One thing we do know for sure is that Julius did not believe the apostle was a flight risk, because he allowed Paul the liberty to visit with the brethren at various stops along the journey.

As the voyage progressed, they first experienced contrary winds, then an unsettling calm as they sailed under Crete. Thankful to have arrived at Fair Havens, the captain and crew made arrangements to sail to the northwest side of the island to Phenice, which is a haven of Crete where they planned to winter. But it was already late fall, when sailing on the Mediterranean could be hazardous. Therefore, Paul, who was a seasoned traveler, stepped forward to advise against such a plan.

Of course, the Captain and the owner probably surmised that Paul was merely a prisoner who was in no rush to get to his own execution. More importantly, there were wine, women, and song at the next stop, passions which the world craves. But the apostle was speaking from experience. He had already suffered three shipwrecks and spent a night and a day in the sea (II Cor. 11:25); therefore, he was well aware of the grave dangers.

Here we see something of Paul’s *character* which can be very helpful in our Christian experience. What was true of him should be true of us as well; this is what he meant when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1). You see, Paul is more than merely the pattern of the long-suffering of God in salvation; he

is also God's pattern of how to live an effective Christian life.

THE CHARACTER OF PAUL

“And [Paul] said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading [cargo] and ship, but also of our lives” (Acts 27:10).

The apostle became the central figure on the voyage from this point forward. Paul was a man of *conviction* who wasn't afraid to speak his mind. Morally, he had no trouble, as some do today, distinguishing between right and wrong in both spiritual things and among the affairs of men. When he stood before Felix the Governor and Tertullus falsely accused him of sedition and insurrection, he responded, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). In other words, he did what was right!

A young pastor approached a senior minister of the gospel with a serious concern. He shared with his friend how some of the brethren were spreading malicious lies about him. The venerable old pastor asked, “Son is any of it true?”

“No sir! Not a word of it.”

“Then don't worry about it! Their sin will find them out soon enough. The important thing is that you have a clear conscience about the matter.”

Looking over the circumstances, Paul perceived it would be wrong to set sail and continue the journey, not merely because of the time of the year, but also because he sensed they had an ulterior motive. The captain and crew wanted to continue the voyage to

the next port of call so they could winter there in sin. As he did in front of Felix, here too the apostle stood his ground in the face of opposition. We, likewise, must always stand up for what is *right*, whether it is wrongdoing by a family member or in defense of Paul's apostleship and message. The key word here is *conviction*.

When Julius agreed with the captain to resume the journey, Paul didn't press the matter. This is an indication that the apostle was a man of extraordinary *tact*. *Webster's* defines *tact* as: “a keen sense of what to do or say in order to maintain good relations with others or avoid offense.” Those who demand to be heard, and refuse to let an issue rest only erode their credibility in the eyes of others. Oftentimes it is merely a matter of *pride* to have their way.

Isaac Newton said, “Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy.” For “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city” (Prov. 18:19a). Thus, Paul was careful never to be offensive for the sake of offense. It was his desire to keep the lines of communication open with those he engaged. This earned the apostle a level of respect and gave him a hearing on weightier issues, even though the response may not have always been favorable. When these principles of tact are violated, it only serves to alienate the hearer.

We've all encountered those who have had such a bad experience with the gospel in the past that they won't even give you the time of day. The lesson here is that we should faithfully share the gospel, but we should never

try to badger someone into believing it, even though others may have done their level best to do so. Once we have put the unbeliever into a defensive posture, he will be less receptive the next time someone has an opportunity to share Christ with him.



We should also be careful not to be overbearing when sharing Paul's gospel. It is incumbent upon us to speak the truth in love. Simply give the brethren a clear, *concise* presentation of the Word, rightly divided, without insulting their intelligence or understanding of the Scriptures. I usually share two passages that appear to contradict one another in the Scriptures, passages which they have probably wondered about themselves. If I sense that they are sincerely interested, I give them some literature that they can read in the privacy of their own homes without feeling threatened or intimidated. The key concept here is *tact*.

SOUND JUDGMENT

As we resume the narrative in Acts 27, we find that, just when the crew thought they had accomplished their purpose, a storm loomed on the horizon—not just any tempest, mind you, but

a wind so fierce and well-known that it had a name: Euroclydon! This type of storm produces gale-force winds that can easily capsize a ship.

“And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive....And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (Acts 27:15,20).

If we study the record carefully, we learn that this was an impressive ship, capable of carrying 276 souls, cargo, and tackling. Be that as it may, that old ship was up one side of the waves and down the other, the crew helpless against the mighty storm. It was all they could do to pull the skiff to safety when the ship started to take on water. They used “helps” (cables) literally to tie the vessel together to keep it seaworthy. With the waves sweeping over the bow and the helps unable to keep the water out, it became necessary to lighten the ship, which was accomplished by throwing the cargo overboard, followed by the tackling. When the sun and stars failed to appear for days, the crew lost their bearings and, along with them, the hope of surviving the ordeal.

“But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship” (Acts 27:21,22).

As all on board faced what appeared to be certain death at sea,

Paul stepped forward. The man who truly walks with God is never affected by the circumstances. He rests in the sovereignty of God, in the knowledge that He is working all things out after the counsel of His own will. In this case, the Lord intervened to reassure Paul that he would appear before Caesar and that all those with him would be spared.

Even though the apostle shared this news with the crew, some on board decided to take things into their own hands and abandon the ship. They attempted to lower the life boat into the sea under the guise that they were lowering the anchors. Here the apostle exercised *sound judgment*. Rather than alerting the other crew members, which might well have resulted in a riot, Paul informed the centurion and the soldiers as to the intention of these seamen. He knew soldiers were men of action. Time was of the essence! Once Paul informed Julius that they could not be saved if these men abandoned ship, the soldiers responded immediately and cut the ropes to the skiff before the sailors could go over the side. This shows us that Julius held the word of Paul in high esteem, especially after his warning came true. We should not be surprised to see Julius in glory some day.

Paul also demonstrated good judgment by encouraging the men to eat after fasting fourteen days. Even the hardiest of men would be weak after such an ordeal. He knew they were going to need every ounce of strength they could muster to swim to shore, if needed. Therefore, after he *gave thanks* to God, he took some bread, broke it

and ate in the presence of them all. This scene has been called “the meal in the storm.”

In times of crisis, it is the spiritually minded man who maintains his composure as Paul did in this situation. The storm may have raged around him, some may have even abandoned him, but his confidence was in the Lord, Who is a present help in time of need. Like Paul, we too must be objective in the Lord’s service. For example, we’ve probably all endured those times in the local church when the tension seemed utterly unbearable. But while others may lose their composure and say things they regret later, may we be of the number who honor and glorify the Lord in our actions and manner of speech. The key concept here is *sound judgment*.

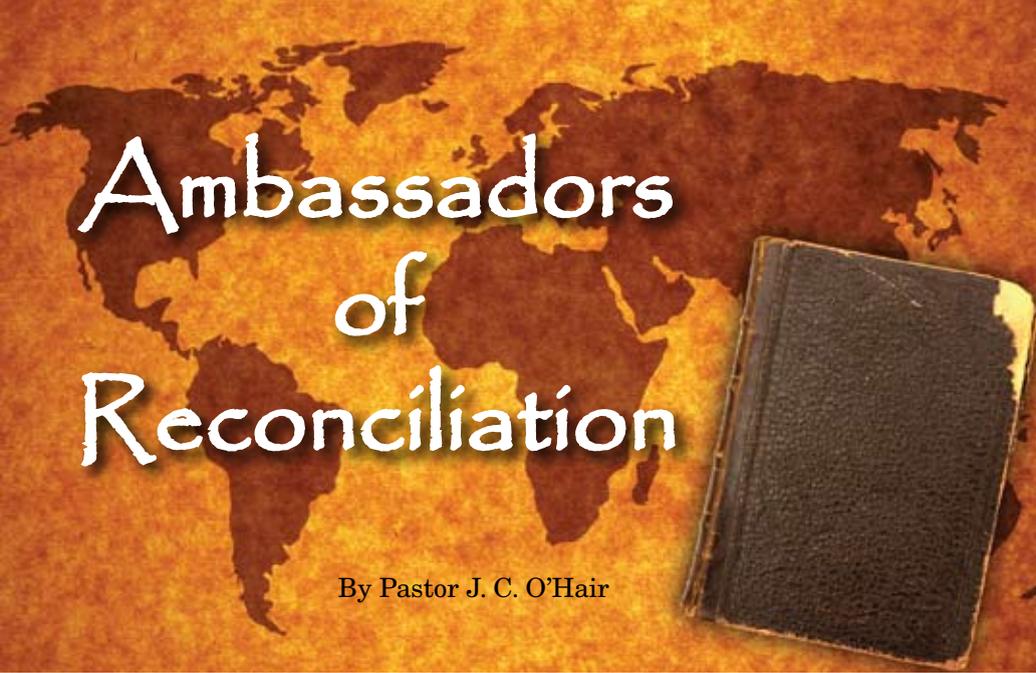


“This scene has been called ‘the meal in the storm.’”

Had those in authority initially heeded Paul’s counsel, they would have avoided the perils of the sea, which can be unforgiving. The same is true today in spiritual matters; the reason the faith of some has suffered shipwreck is their rejection of Paul’s unique apostleship and message. 

Endnote

1. Kent Crockett’s Sermon Illustrations, “Wrestling with God,” www.kentcrockett.com (Oct. 2013).



Ambassadors of Reconciliation

By Pastor J. C. O'Hair

In Great Britain, France, Mexico, and other countries, the United States maintains ambassadors. Such a representative of the United States is called “minister plenipotentiary and ambassador extraordinary.” As a servant of this country, he is a servant full of power or authority and, being the personal spokesman for many millions of people, with the president, the Cabinet, the Congress, the army and the navy behind him, he is truly a representative extraordinary.

Of course, the man selected for such an important office should be fully qualified for the position. In order that he may honorably and uncompromisingly protect the interests of his nation and people at the foreign court, he must be exceedingly careful about receiving personal favors, concessions, and gifts from official representatives of that foreign nation.

In the important act of establishing treaties and agreements between his own government and the foreign nation that has received him as United States representative, this ambassador is forwarded a government document from Washington, bearing the seal of the United States of America and signed by the President and the Secretary of State. In dignity, accompanied by his official attendants, the ambassador presents the document to the foreign court for the signature of the Ruler and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Thus treaties of possession, commerce, and peace are made.

It is deplorable when such a representative is chosen, not because he is qualified for the post, but to pay a political debt.

Surely it is a great privilege and a great honor to be an ambassador representing the United States.

It is not an easy task to persuade people that it is an even greater honor and a greater privilege to be an ambassador for Christ, and the Kingdom of God. Note the statement of the Apostle Paul, recorded in II Corinthians 5:20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

This same apostle, in Philippians 3:20, says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The word "conversation" here could be translated "citizenship" or even "politics." There is a sense, then, in which the citizenship and politics of every representative of Christ is in heaven. But while here on earth, as ambassadors for Jesus Christ, those who belong to Christ have the very difficult task of trying to be pleasant among sinners, while at the same time being governed by Galatians 1:10: "for do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

In His wonderful prayer, recorded in John 17, the Lord Jesus said concerning His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (v. 16). The qualification for an ambassador is set forth in Colossians 1:12 to 15: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In Whom we have redemption through His

blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." In Colossians 1:12, the expression "hath made us meet" could be translated "hath qualified us." In other words, before we can acceptably represent Christ we must qualify. We must be delivered; we must be redeemed. In Colossians 1:20 we are told how this is accomplished. It is through the blood of His cross. Here we note that it is by the blood of the cross of Christ that the believer is reconciled and is at peace with God. We quote Colossians 1:20 to 22:



"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight."

Here we note that alienated enemies are made wholly unblameable and unreprouable because of what Christ did through death.

Peace and reconciliation by the blood of His cross! What a

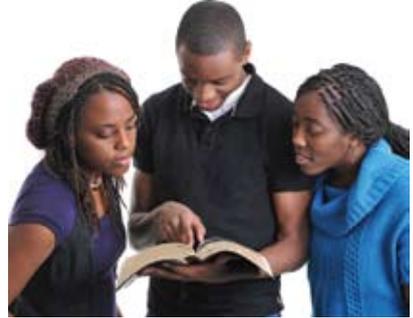
wonderful message God's ministers have to proclaim to lost sinners. And what glorious good news the sinner may receive and be saved for time and eternity.

We go back now to II Corinthians 5:17 to 21:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Here we note that the ambassador for Christ is a new creature. According to Ephesians 2:10 he is God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. Man by nature belongs to the old creation. He is identified with Adam, the sinner. The most important transformation that can come to any man is to get out of Adam and in Christ—that is, to be identified with “the last Adam (I Cor. 15:45),” who is now the glorified Man in heaven. All who are in Adam are in sin, in the flesh, and under condemnation. If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. The new creature is no longer dead in sin. He is dead to sin. The believer's old man has been crucified with

Christ. He is in the Spirit. He is made accepted in Christ, the Beloved. He is complete in Christ. He is waiting to appear with Christ in glory. His citizenship is in heaven. He is in the world, but not of the world. And now he has a new responsibility. For unto him is committed the word of reconciliation. To him is given the ministry of reconciliation.



In these closing verses of the fifth chapter of II Corinthians we observe that it is not the sinner seeking God, but God, through ambassadors of Christ, seeking the sinner, and beseeching the sinner, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

There is no more definite statement of the gospel, no clearer announcement of saving truth, than we find in II Corinthians 5:21: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

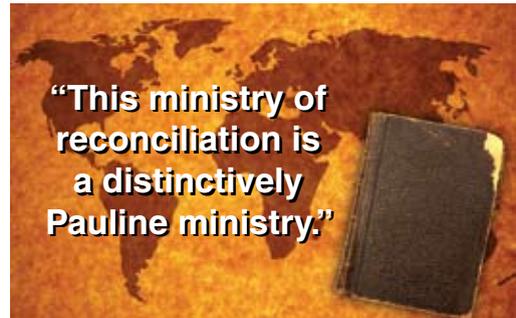
When the Lord Jesus Christ cried “finished,” and yielded up the Ghost on the cross, He was crowned with a crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse (Gen. 3:17-19). He was made sin, although He knew no sin. The God of all grace ordained and permitted the cruel death of the sinless Christ, yea,

offered up His well-beloved Son, so that poor unrighteous men might, by His infinite grace, through faith, be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Man's only place of security and divine blessing is in Christ.

This ministry of reconciliation is a distinctively Pauline ministry. More than a dozen times that great apostle emphasized the fact that he was the apostle, the preacher, and the teacher of the Gentiles; that unto him the risen Christ committed the "dispensation of the grace of God" for Gentiles (Eph. 3:1-3), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" for Gentiles (Eph. 3:8), "this mystery among the Gentiles" (Col. 1:27) and "the fellowship of the mystery" for Gentiles (Eph. 3:9).

According to Galatians 2:8, God was mighty in Peter in the apostleship of the circumcision. Peter received from Christ the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the so-called "great commission." In his ministry, recorded in the early chapters of Acts, Peter preached unto Israel repentance and restitution, the gospel of the kingdom, and the promises and blessings of the covenants which God made concerning Israel, but never once did he preach reconciliation to Gentiles. He did not refer to Adam. Never once in those chapters did Peter preach to Israel concerning the "old man" and the "new man," concerning the "old creation" and the "new creation." Peter did not preach concerning the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, or concerning the believer being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Peter

had no authority from Christ even to refer to uncircumcised Abram from whence came Paul's gospel of the uncircumcision (Gal. 3:8). It was unto Paul that the risen Lord committed the gospel of the uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7), the ministry of reconciliation, and the mystery concerning the Body of Christ. When we have the ministry of reconciliation, we invariably find linked with it the ministry of the new creation and the truth of the believer's identification—out of Adam, into Christ. The word "atonement" in Romans 5:11 is a mistranslation. It should read "reconciliation." Then follows the story of Adam and Christ, the old creation and the new creation, and the new creature's identification with Christ (Rom. 5:12-6:14).



Our mission today is to beseech sinners to believe the word of reconciliation, to believe that the document has been signed and sealed, and that the Lord Jesus Christ provided this reconciliation and made peace by the blood of His cross. Truly, with such a ministry, we should know that we are ambassadors extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary. How willing and eager sinners should be to accept this glorious gospel message to be at peace with God,

to be reconciled to God, and to be redeemed for time and eternity.

If you are troubled to know under which one of the Lord's commissions you are to labor, remember these words of Paul: "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me [Paul] as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter" (Gal. 2:7). And again, Paul's words in II Timothy 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me [Paul] among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Yet again in Ephesians 3:1 and 2, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles"... "the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Still again, "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man...but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11,12).

"That I [Paul] should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles...I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:16,20).

Note what Paul says concerning himself in I Corinthians 3:10: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me [Paul], as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation." When the risen Christ gave the so-called great commission to Peter and his associates in Matthew 28:19 and 20, he never so much as hinted at the gospel of uncircumcision, the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles, or the ministry of reconciliation which some years later He committed, by revelation, to Paul who then declared, "I am the

apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Rom. 11:13).

The pity is that the Lord's ambassadors today minimize Paul's office instead of magnifying it.

Well, fellow Christians, our commission and message today is the word of reconciliation. That reconciliation message was not the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 because Israel had not yet been cast away, and God's Word instructs us in Romans 11:15, "the casting away of them [Israel] be the reconciling of the world." After Christ had been raised from the dead, Peter declared that He was raised from the dead to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel (Acts 5:30,31). Christ being raised from the dead to give repentance and forgiveness of sins is quite different from the reconciling of the world because Israel was cast away.

Now here is sufficient divine authority for our ministry, for the Lord "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19), and "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18).

In this context, note our identification with Christ—II Corinthians 5:15—and also note why we labour as ambassadors of reconciliation: "the love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14); "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11).

Let us not be guilty of the spiritual crime of perverting the glorious divine message of grace. In the message of reconciliation, sinners are not to beg God to be reconciled to them and save them. Carefully note II Corinthians 5:20:

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

God beseeches the sinner. We pray the sinner. This is not the sinner seeking God and salvation. This is God beseeching the sinner to accept the perfect work

of redemption accomplished by Christ. When He was made sin on the cross, God was reconciled. The reconciliation becomes mutual the moment the sinner believes God and receives Christ. We have a blessed ministry, a great responsibility, and a glorious privilege as ambassadors of reconciliation. 



If you enjoyed this article, penned by the founder of the modern grace movement, it can be found in the J. C. O’Hair Library on our website, along with many other messages by this patriarch of the faith.

Question Box

“How could Peter say to the Jews that their inheritance is reserved for them in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4) if their hope is earthly?”

When the disciples thought “that the kingdom of God should immediately appear (Luke 19:11), the Lord told a parable. The “certain nobleman” (v. 12) represents the Lord Himself, who went to the “far country” of heaven at His ascension (Acts 1:9) “to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” This means that the kingdom that will eventually be established for Israel on earth was reserved for them in heaven at that time.

Before leaving, the nobleman charged his servants with conducting his business while he was gone (v. 13), a picture of how the Lord left His disciples in charge of His ministry after He left. But after the “citizens” of Israel killed the Lord, they “sent a message after Him” (v. 14) by killing Stephen, a message that said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

When the nobleman “was returned, *having received the kingdom*” (v. 15), he gathered his servants to reward them according to their faithfulness (vv. 15-27). This speaks of how, when the Lord returns to the earth, He will return with the kingdom that is currently “reserved in heaven” for Israel, and He will award positions in the government of the kingdom to faithful Jews at that time.

—Pastor Kurth

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow cardigan over a white top, is sitting and reading an open book. Her hands are clasped together in front of the book. The background is dark and out of focus.

Compassion for the Lost

By Pastor John Fredericksen

Tim Winton is a celebrated novelist in Australia, and author of more than a dozen bestselling books. When interviewed by a popular ABC television show, he explained the details of an amazing event that completely changed his family's life. When Tim was five years old, a drunk driver knocked his father, who was a policeman, off his motorcycle. His father was a very big man and so busted up by the accident that he could not possibly care for himself. Tim and his mother were also unable to care for him properly. Then one day a local Christian who had heard about their troubles knocked on their door. He not only offered to do whatever was needed to help, but this believer in Christ would regularly carry Tim's dad from his bed to the bathtub, bathe him, then carry him back to bed. Moreover, this Christian did all this without being asked or being paid. This act of kindness was what Tim called a "strangely sacrificial act," and it was the doorway to faith in Christ for the entire Winton family.¹

When God told Jonah to go preach to the city of Nineveh about impending divine judgment, it is startling to consider how persistently uncompassionate the prophet remained. Rather than go preach as God commanded him, the prophet fled in the opposite direction. After being divinely redirected through the experience in the great fish for three days, he reluctantly proclaimed the coming judgment. When the people of Nineveh repented and God altered His plans to send judgment, Jonah became extremely angry and depressed; this was exactly what he feared might happen. He told the Lord, "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil," or the severe judgment, that He had promised to bring on Nineveh for their sins (Jonah 4:2).

This fear, that God might judge Nineveh, was why Jonah initially fled away from that great city toward Tarshish. But how could Jonah be so upset about God extending His mercy to lost souls? How could he have so little compassion toward those lost in trespasses and sin? Was Jonah simply prejudiced against all non-Jews?

The answers to these questions can be found in both history and Scripture. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Due to Israel's persistent sins, God's prophets predicted that the Lord would use Assyria to punish the Jews (Isa. 7:17). In Jonah's mind, if God delivered His wrath on Assyria, then just maybe His judgment on Israel would be averted. But there was more weighing on the heart of Jonah.

The Assyrians were a notoriously savage and brutal people. When they conquered a land it always included unthinkable atrocities, some of which Jonah had likely seen, and he, with all the nations in the vicinity, plainly knew what would lie ahead. Those overcome by the Assyrian armies were frequently impaled on spears then left to die. Many were tightly stretched out, staked to the ground, then slowly flayed alive. The skins of the victims were hung on the walls of the city to impart terror. Hands, feet, ears, and noses were cut off of many of the people who were allowed to live. Pyramids of skulls were left outside of cities while the armies reduced the buildings and surrounding trees to ashes. Such a history of inhuman cruelty brought fear, panic, hatred, and dread to all who learned that this bloody nation was headed toward their homeland. Humanly speaking, it only makes sense that Jonah would have no compassion for such a people whom he knew would show no compassion on his beloved people, the Jews.

Jonah was not alone in his disdain of Assyria. The prophet Nahum felt the same way. He writes about Nineveh describing its whip, lies, witchcrafts, and multitudes of carcasses (3:1-4). Then, when proclaiming their utter destruction, he prophesied: "all that hear of the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee" (3:19). Like Jonah, Nahum had no compassion for these savage people who would show no compassion on others.

Still, God had compassion on the Assyrians, and it was right—it was merciful—for the Lord to stay His judgment when the inhabitants of Nineveh repented. This was God's primary message to Jonah while he lamented the extension of divine mercy to the Assyrians. The Lord asked His prophet, "And should I not spare Nineveh...wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons...and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:11).

"We must cultivate a tender heart toward all the lost, including..."



God wanted Jonah to see that compassion for lost souls, even those who were humanly so undeserving, and compassion upon animals, was of monumental importance.

It should strike each of us that the Lord likewise wants His people today to demonstrate compassion for lost souls. We must cultivate a tender heart toward all the lost, including those we consider the most undeserving: the profane, immoral, those in addiction, members of gangs, those from backgrounds in the cults, and those of the Muslim faith. Our Savior loves them too. He suffered, bled, and died for them, and wants them to hear the gospel and believe, and receive eternal life. If we, who know salvation by grace alone, do not seek to reach them for Christ, they will be forever punished in the Lake of Fire. The Scriptures' vivid descriptions of torment, regret, no rest day or night, and an eternity without reprieve are intended to move every Christian into action. God has given all of us the "ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18), or the mission of reaching lost souls with a gospel of pure grace. Are you doing your part?

Sometime reaching a lost soul begins through acts of kindness, such as the believer who selflessly helped care for the father of Tim Winton. Let's choose to show compassion toward lost souls. Let's equip ourselves with gospel tracts, a mindset of unselfish service to others, and let's seek to share Christ with someone today. 

Endnote

1. John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 97-98.

Called Home



Pastor Charles Wages was called home to be with the Lord earlier this year at the age of 96. Before his retirement, he served as the pastor of the *Grace Bible Church* in Fort Worth, Texas for 37 years. Brother Wages was also the editor of the *Timely Messenger*, a Bible study periodical that always gives a clear presentation of the gospel of the grace of God. In my contact with him over years, he was always kind and very gracious. He was a Christian gentleman in every sense of the word. We ask you to remember in prayer his dear wife, Beverly, to whom he was married for almost 76 years. May God comfort his family, and his extended church family, with the full assurance of our blessed hope.

—Pastor Paul M. Sadler



BBS Letter Excerpts

From West Africa:

“Please, if you do not understand the moving of the Holy Spirit, pray and ask and it will be explained to you by Him, or don’t talk about spiritual things that you don’t understand.”

From Louisiana:

“This answer is perfect! Just what I was searching for. I feel the weight of the world lifted from my shoulders. Thanks!”

From Arizona:

“I currently receive the monthly *Searchlight*, which is very helpful for small Bible study groups. I have currently been reading *Things That Differ*, which I think is fantastic! I’m hungry for the Word of God rightly divided.”

From Alberta:

“Thank you for your gracious offer to answer any questions that I may have. You may regret that, by the way! This is all so new and exciting for me, yet I have no one that I can discuss these things with. My husband is interested, as are my parents...I go to a Baptist church, so that makes things interesting. Don’t want to ruffle any feathers. Good thing I’m not a member...can’t get kicked out!” (Go ahead, ruffle some feathers [Psa. 91:4]!—Ed).

From New York:

“Thanks so much for the *Berean Searchlight*. It seems the messages are so timely in my everyday life.”

From Michigan:

“I have been doing a lot of reading from the material that I ordered from BBS. It’s been great. I just finished *Baptism and the Bible* by C. R. Stam. Awesome book!...I’m not sure what to call myself anymore. Maybe a Berean Baptist or simply a grace-believing follower of Jesus Christ... Great article on baptism. I’ve got to get rid of this ‘guilt’ problem (lol). It’s hard when you’ve been taught that it’s ‘the first act of obedience.’ Sure couldn’t find that in my Bible though...my brother read your article on water baptism and his comment was ‘that says it all.’”

From Facebook:

“Thank you so much for your magazine. It really blesses me and strengthens my spiritual being.”

From Texas:

“I have thoroughly enjoyed your magazine, and have greatly benefited from reading through several books by C. R. Stam (*Things That Differ; Paul, His Apostleship; Acts, Dispensationally Considered*). You’ve convinced me that Pentecost continued the prophetic program, and that the Church belonged to a mystery revelation made to Paul. This has clarified a number of Scriptures for me. Stam writes so clearly and with such insight that I’m amazed that I’ve never heard of him before, and that he is not included in the more popular dispensational resources (such as the *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*).”

From Oregon:

“Every issue of the *Searchlight* is such a help in our understanding and growth in the Scriptures. It has been five years now since someone explained, and we began to grasp, the real difference between Christ’s earthly ministry and what Christ revealed to our Apostle Paul...I was a good ol’ faithful Baptist all those years, but always something didn’t seem to fit—but now’ what a difference! I listened to Les Feldick in a weekend conference in southern California with Paul Sadler, and for the first time the Scriptures made sense...what joy and growth...Some have called us ‘too dispensational,’ but can’t seem to explain what they mean. So...Dave Stewart’s article *Dispensational or Disobedient?...* guess which we’d rather be!”

From Tennessee:

“I always love all your introductions in all your writings, Pastor Sadler, what a great thought. The Tennessee hills are alive with the sound of Paul’s gospel.”

From Kenya:

“I’ve come across some of your books, and I liked the writing and very well-balanced messages. I wish to request if you could put me on your mailing list.”

From Facebook:

“As with anything, redesign usually takes some ‘getting used to.’ I personally like the easier layout of your website for finding recent issues of the *Searchlight*, sermons, and the bookstore. Innovation is a great tool. Great job on the redesign.” (Kudos to BBS webmaster Richard Church!—Ed).

From Colorado:

“We very much enjoyed Pastor Sadler and Pastor Fredericksen here in Colorado last May. We want to support your work, and the keeping of C. R. Stam’s books in print.” (Just designate your gift as such, and that’s how we’ll use the funds.—Ed).

From Florida:

“I’ve been walking with the Lord since 1996, and I am an avid student of the Scriptures. I am an independent, fundamental Baptist believer...but recently I’ve come to see that there’s more to dispensationalism than what I’ve been taught, and have taught others over the years. As a ‘preacher in training,’ I have an enormous burden not only to know the whole truth for myself, I must proclaim it to others.”

From California:

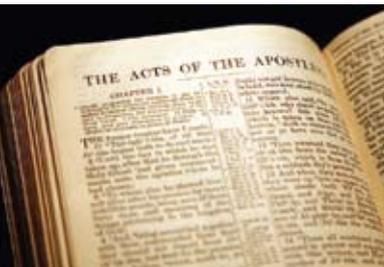
“I thoroughly enjoyed the article entitled *Are You Sure You’re Secure?...* most specifically how Pastor Ricky pointed out that Paul was speaking of the unrighteous not the saints. This article has given me new insight into eternal security...You continue to mention Paul’s gospel—is this different from the gospel message? Could you please explain the difference...?”

From Arizona:

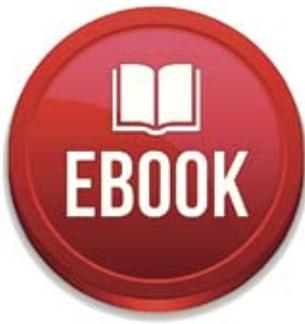
“After I’m done reading the *Searchlight*, I like to share it with my other Christian brothers and sisters, even if I have to mail it to them.”

From New York:

“Thank you for continuing to send me the very informative *Berean Searchlight* over the years. Very sound teaching. I credit this teaching with my being able to better understand the Bible.”

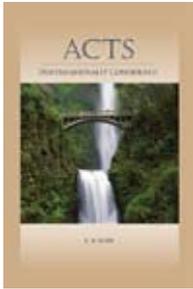


“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”
—Acts 17:11

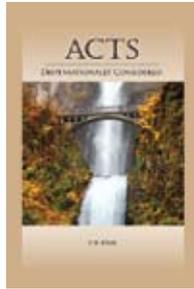


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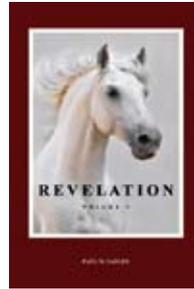
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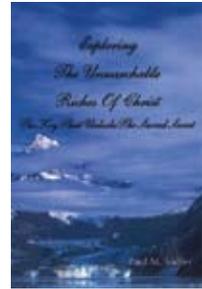
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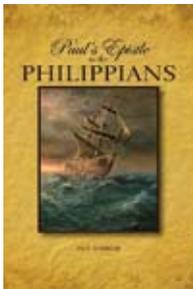
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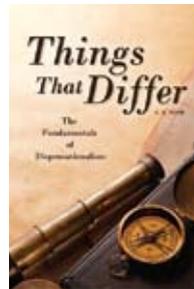
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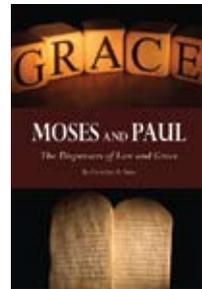
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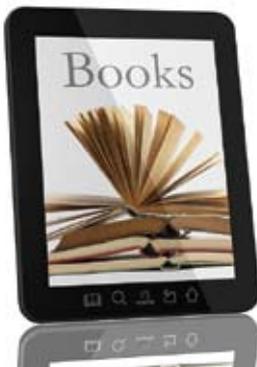
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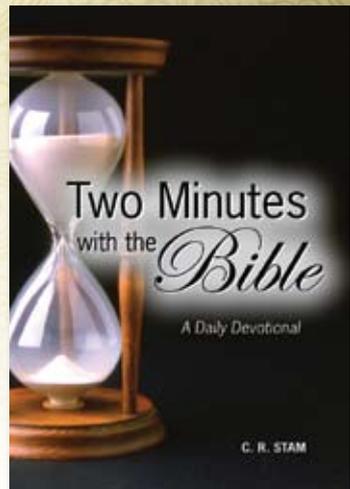


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News and Announcements

New MP3 Messages: We have a backlog of conference messages by BBS President Pastor Paul M. Sadler, on varying themes, going back many years, which we are posting weekly in the “Audio” section of our website. If you can’t travel to our conferences, that doesn’t mean you can’t get in on the blessing! Another recent addition that we are sure will be of interest to grace believers features BBS founder Pastor C. R. Stam fielding questions on water baptism in a classroom setting at *Moody Bible Institute*. So check in to our MP3 section today, and don’t forget to bring your Bible!

You Don’t Even Need a Passport! Pastor Michael Ortiz has invited our editor to come and minister to the saints of the *Juana Diaz Bible Church* in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, and now wishes to invite all *Searchlight* readers to come and share in the fellowship around God’s rightly divided Word. Mark your calendar for this January 10-12 conference, and be sure to make your plans *now* to escape the cold in the continental states to the warmth of this United States territory. If you don’t want to disappoint Pastor Ortiz, you can contact him at kidzon@yahoo.com.

We Beg Your Pardon! We slipped up in the August *Searchlight* when we published an excerpt from our *Growing Up in Grace* Sunday School lessons and attributed it to Lori Gardner. This lesson, entitled *Do or Done?*, was actually written by LeAnn Beauchamp, who says that she received so much help from Kathleen Baker, Ann Dickey, and Bonnie Lawson that the lesson was really more of a team effort, something we are happy to acknowledge with this correction.

Pastoral Opportunity: A group of northern Colorado grace believers are looking for a pastor to lead them in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” and proclaiming the mystery given to the Apostle Paul. If you are interested in the position, and can relocate to this scenic area, call (970) 231-4716, or write to *Faith Bible Church*, 544 W. 66th Street, Loveland, CO 80538, or at faithbiblechurch@uccweb.com.



Our cover photo was taken by Robert Roosendaal of Southworth, Washington. The *North Head Lighthouse* is located on the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington State. North Head is the windiest lighthouse area on the West Coast. Winds of 120 miles per hour have been recorded at the site.

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Should the vine put forth no more, nor the olive yield her store;
Though the sickening flocks should fall, and the herds desert the stall,
Yet to Thee my soul shall raise grateful vows and solemn praise;
And, when every blessing's flown, love Thee for Thyself alone.

—*Anna L. Barbauld*