

The **BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT™**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

October 2022



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This month’s cover features Wittenbergen Lighthouse in Hamburg, Germany.

The Purpose of the Berean Bible Society is to help you understand, enjoy, and apply 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” (2 Tim. 2:15), to energize the transformation of the Christian life, and to encourage the local church.

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A Note From the President

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Saturday, August 20th, we held our first ever *Transformed by Grace* Conference. Pastor Georges Craesmeyer and the saints at *Grace Bible Church of Streamwood* in Streamwood, Illinois, were the gracious hosts of this event.

About 85-90 attended in person plus some who joined us via live stream. I spoke three times that day and Pastor Kurth spoke once. In each session I explained the various ministries of *Berean Bible Society*. And we had the opportunity to introduce the attendees to two solid grace churches: *Grace Bible Church of Streamwood* and *Faith Bible Church* in Steger, Illinois, where Pastor Kurth has served as pastor for more than 40 years.

I have had two very touching interactions recently regarding our television ministry. One was at this conference. A dear woman named Maryann, with her daughter, made the hour's drive to Streamwood from her home in Chicago. She watches every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. on WJYS. She told me that she came to meet me in person so she could tell me that *Transformed by Grace* has changed her life. She couldn't have been more sincere. She didn't explain exactly how, but it was clear that the Word of God, rightly divided, had made a deep impact on her heart and life.

Another such encouraging encounter was with a visitor named Carl who stopped by *Berean Bible Society*. Carl is 80 years old, and a recent widower from Georgia. He has been very active in the local churches he has attended over the years, serving in whatever capacity was needed. He has served as a Sunday School teacher and has bused many kids to church to get them under the hearing of the gospel.

However, in the last year, as a result of watching *Transformed by Grace* on Roku, he came to see and understand Paul's unique apostleship and message. Carl made the trip to visit family in Michigan and New York, but he went out of his way to come to Wisconsin to meet and personally thank me for this ministry. He told me that reading the Bible all his life was like looking at a muddy lake. But after coming to see grace, he said that the lake became so crystal clear he could see all the way to the bottom. He said that he only wishes he had seen this truth years earlier and that he plans to spend his remaining time on earth making it known to others.

I bring these two encouraging encounters to your attention because our readers, our partners in ministry, should know how they are being used of God to have a positive impact on the audience of *Transformed by Grace*. I can't emphasize enough what a large important role you play in bringing the Word of God, rightly divided, to a lost and confused world.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Kevin J. Sadler, President



God-Fearing, Moral, Religious, *but Lost*

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway” (Acts 10:1-2).

Cornelius was a Roman centurion who was stationed in Caesarea, a major Roman seaport at Roman Judaea on the Mediterranean Sea at that time. Luke records that Cornelius was a devout, God-fearing man, who gave alms generously to impoverished Jewish people, and who prayed to God all the time. And as Cornelius feared God, his example of devotion led to “all his house” fearing God with him.

Acts 10:3 informs us that Cornelius observed the Jewish hour of prayer, praying at “the ninth hour” in his home (cf. Acts 3:1). And Acts 10:30 records that he prayed earnestly and intensely, even fasting as he sought God. Acts 10:22 further describes Cornelius as “a just man,” or an upright man, one who lived a moral life.

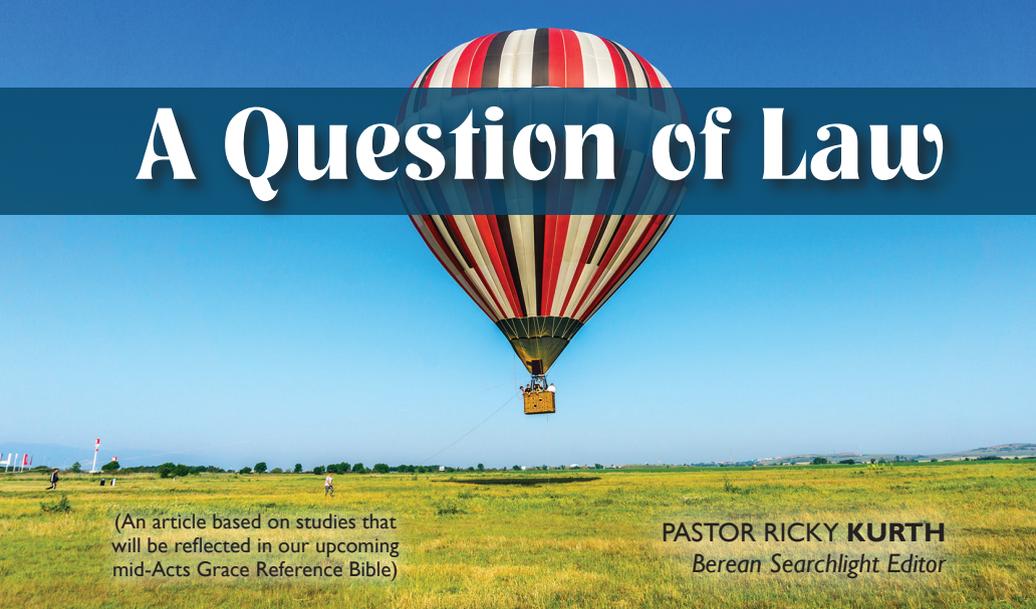
Cornelius was God-fearing, moral, and religious, but Cornelius was lost and on his way to hell. By all outward appearances, one might’ve thought he was saved. But the fear of God he possessed, his earnest prayers, fasting, moral life, and kindness to others did not mean he had eternal life. He was still unsaved.

The Lord sent Peter to Cornelius that he might “receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). In Peter’s retelling of this encounter in Acts 11, we learn that Peter came to “tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14).

We often look at the account of Cornelius in light of its dispensational significance and Peter being shown that God’s dealings with mankind were changing as God was turning to the Gentiles. But Cornelius is also a reminder that being a seemingly good, moral person who prays, fears the true God, and does good things does not mean that one is right with God.

Today we’re continually surrounded by people who are God-fearing, moral, and religious, but lost, like Cornelius. They need to hear the good news and be reconciled to God by trusting the gospel of grace that Christ died for our sins and rose again (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

—Pastor Kevin Sadler



A Question of Law

(An article based on studies that will be reflected in our upcoming mid-Acts Grace Reference Bible)

PASTOR RICKY KURTH
Berean Searchlight Editor

A man got lost one day while hot air ballooning. Lowering the balloon to near ground level, he spotted a man and asked him where he was. The man replied, “You’re in a balloon about 30 feet off the ground.” The balloonist replied, “You must be a lawyer. You gave me advice that is completely accurate, yet completely useless!” The lawyer replied, “And you must be a lawyer’s client. You didn’t bring a map so you’re in trouble of your own making, you expect me to provide you with an instant fix, and yet somehow your problem is all my fault!”

When we have questions about the law, we ask them of lawyers. But when it came to questions about *the law of Moses*, God told Haggai to ask them of *Israel’s priests*:

“Thus saith the LORD...Ask now the priests concerning the law...” (Hag. 2:11).

Before we consider the question God wanted His prophet

to ask the priests, you might be wondering why God didn’t send Haggai to one of the “lawyers” in Israel that we read about in Luke 14:3 and other places. Evidently this class of men had arisen in Israel in New Testament times to interpret the Law of Moses when God’s people had questions concerning it.

But that just shows how far God’s people had drifted from the way He had set things up in Israel. When God gave the law, He put *the priests* in charge of knowing it, and answering questions about it.

“For *the priest’s* lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at *his* mouth...” (Mal. 2:7).

If God had wanted a separate class of men called lawyers to answer questions about the law, He would have told His people to establish one—but He didn’t! So it’s no surprise that lawyers in Israel are always cast in a *bad*

light (Matt. 22:35; Luke 10:25, etc.). The Lord said, “the...lawyers *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:30), that is, of John the Baptist (v. 29). That meant that lawyers *weren’t saved*, for John preached “baptism...*for the remission of sins*” (Mark 1:4). And *that* meant that lawyers were likely to give the *wrong* answers when asked about the law. No wonder the Lord said,

“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Luke 11:52).

Part of the “key of knowledge” that allowed the Jews to enter the kingdom of heaven at that time was knowing they had to be baptized to be saved! When those lawyers *refused* to be baptized, they failed to enter the kingdom. And when people *asked* them about John’s baptism, they must have hindered *others* from entering the kingdom by dissuading them from being baptized as well.

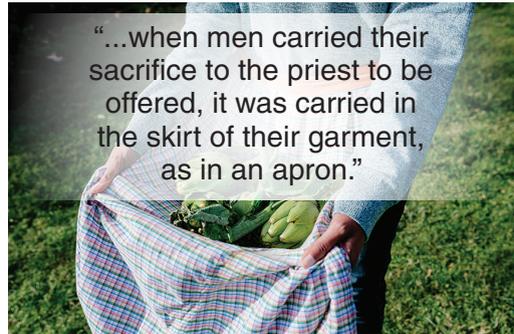
Of course, in our text in Haggai 2, God directed Haggai *to the priests* to pose His questions about the law, reinforcing the way He had established things.

In and Out of Touch

Now let’s see what God wanted the prophet to ask the priests:

“If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No” (Hag. 2:12).

The “holy flesh” here was the flesh of Israel’s animal sacrifices. Moses said, “*the flesh of the ram... wherewith the atonement was made...is holy*” (Ex. 29:32-34). But evidently, when men carried their sacrifice to the priest to be offered, it was carried in the skirt of their garment, as in an apron. And God wanted Haggai to ask the priests what would happen if the skirt bearing the sacrifice brushed up against an object on its way to be offered. Would the object it brushed up against *also* be considered holy. If so, *it too* would have to be offered to God, for the word *holy* means “set apart unto the LORD” (Ex. 13:2 cf v. 12), and things set apart unto God belonged to Him.



“...when men carried their sacrifice to the priest to be offered, it was carried in the skirt of their garment, as in an apron.”

The reason God asked Haggai to ask the priests this question was to see if they knew that there was a law that covered it. And there was—sort of! Leviticus 6:25,27 says,

“...the sin offering...whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy...”

But you’ll notice that this law didn’t *exactly* address God’s question. He didn’t ask what would happen if *the offering* touched

something. He asked what would happen *if the skirt that was carrying the offering* touched something.

But even when the law didn't clearly spell out the answer to questions about the law, it was still the priest's job to address them. Speaking of the priests (Ezek. 44:15), God told Ezekiel,

"...they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane...in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to My judgments..." (Ezek. 44:23,24).

When it came to questions not *directly* addressed by the Law, controversies would naturally arise. God said that the priest was expected to *settle* such controversies by extrapolating an answer based on the issues that God *did* address directly in the law with His "judgments." This is similar to how judges in our courts must also make decisions based on extrapolations of our laws when an issue is not directly addressed by our civil laws.

In Haggai's day, the priests answered his question correctly (2:12). The objects Haggai asked about were *not* made holy because they didn't touch the holy sacrifice itself; they only touched *the skirt* of the garment that was *bearing* the sacrifice.

Now before God explains why He wants Haggai to ask the priests this question, He has His prophet submit *yet another* question to them. Still speaking about the bread, pottage, wine, and oil he mentioned in the previous verse, we read,

"Then said Haggai, *If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered...It shall be unclean*" (Hag. 2:13).

When a man in Israel touched a dead body, he was considered unclean (Num. 19:11). If he in turn touched something else, the rule was: "whatsoever the unclean person toucheth *shall be unclean*" (v. 22). So the answer to *this* question was a little more cut and dried, and once again the priests answered it correctly.

And Your Point Is?

Before we read the point God was making for His people in Israel in this passage, think about the point we can make from it for ourselves. When it comes to the kind of people with whom you choose to associate, you might think you can make sinful Christian friends clean up their act by hanging around with them. But what usually happens is the opposite. Their sinful ways end up influencing *you* instead!

If you think about it, God's laws reflect the very laws of nature. When mixed together, clean water



doesn't make dirty water clean; dirty water makes clean water

dirty. A healthy child can't make a sick child healthy, but a sick child can make a healthy child sick.

So “touch not the unclean thing” *even among believers* by choosing your friends wisely (2 Cor. 6:17), for “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). Leaven is a type of sin in the Bible *because it spreads*. You are better off not letting sinful friends help sin get started in your life by remembering that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).



Leprosy is another type of sin in the Bible, for it too was highly contagious. But the Lord could heal lepers by touching them because He was God in the flesh. He was able to make virtue flow from Him to the leper, instead of allowing the leprosy of the leper to flow to Him. But the best way for those of us who *aren't* God in the flesh to avoid contracting the leprosy of sin is to avoid hanging around sinful “lepers.” You can't help but rub shoulders with sinful people at work or school (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9,10), but you need to be selective about who you hang around with *after* work or school.

Now I'm sure God had those points in mind when He gave Israel the laws we are considering. But He had *other* points in mind in our text here as well, as we see when Haggai gets to the point:

“Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean” (Hag. 2:14).

Earlier we saw that animal sacrifices were considered holy (Ex. 23:32-34). But Haggai said of his countrymen that the sacrifices *they* were offering were *not* holy. Verse 14 says that “that which *they* offer there is *unclean*.” Their offerings were *made* unclean because of their disobedience to God's commandment.

And we know what *specific* disobedience God had in mind here, for He had instructed the people of Israel to rebuild the temple, and they had *opposed* this instruction (Hag. 1:4). That meant *they themselves* were unclean. Normally, contact with their holy sacrifices would make them clean, as we saw in Leviticus 6:25,27. But the “skirt” of their disobedience came between them (cf. Hag. 2:12), and prevented the holy sacrifice from making them holy.

Skirting the Issue

If you're not sure what I mean by that, consider the indictment God leveled against His people in Jeremiah 2:34:

“...in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents...”

The “poor innocents” were the babies the Jews were offering to the false god Molech as human sacrifices in Jeremiah’s day (Jer. 32:35). Their blood wasn’t *literally* on the skirts of their parents, of course, for when they would “cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech,” fire doesn’t make a baby *bleed*. God was saying that the blood of the innocents was *figuratively* on their skirts because of their disobedience to God. This may have been because they carried their babies to sacrifice to Molech in the skirts of their garments, just as they carried their *animal* sacrifices.

But that was in Jeremiah’s day. In Haggai’s day, the figurative sin on the skirts of God’s people in Israel didn’t involve sacrificing babies, it concerned their failure to rebuild the temple. The holy animal sacrifices they carried to God couldn’t make *them* holy due to the skirt of that disobedience that came between them and God (cf. Isa. 59:2). So instead of those sacrifices making them clean, their uncleanness was making their sacrifices *unclean*, the way the unclean man who touched a dead body made everything he touched unclean. This was the point God was making with the questions He had Haggai ask of the priests.

Now when God’s people in Israel were disobedient, He would *chasten* them with things like bad crops (Lev. 26:18-20), and they were certainly reaping this fate in Haggai’s day (1:5,6). God had warned them, “Thou shalt carry

much seed out into the field, *and shalt gather but little in*” (Deut. 28:38), and Haggai reminded his people that this is what was happening to them when he said, “ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came to little*” (1:9). The prophet told them to “consider” their ways (1:5) because they just didn’t seem to be making the connection between their disobedience and the chastening they were receiving that the law prescribed for their disobedience. Once they considered the connection, they repented and went to work on the temple (Hag. 1:12-15).



“...they carried their babies to sacrifice to Molech in the skirts of their garments, just as they carried their animal sacrifices.”

But then some discouragement set in when they saw that the size of the new temple couldn’t compare with the size of *Solomon’s* temple (2:1-3), and the work on God’s house came to a screeching halt. So Haggai *again* asked them to “consider” the connection between their sin and the chastening that the law prescribed for their sin, this time *begging* them:

“And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

“Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty” (Hag. 2:15,16).

Doesn't that sound like they “looked for much, and, lo, it came to little” (1:9)?

If that didn't jar their memory of God's covenant with them, and cause them to consider that they were being judged again, Haggai went on to remind them of *more* of God's judgments that had befallen them:

“I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to Me, saith the LORD” (Hag. 2:17).

Blasting and mildew were more tools in God's chastening toolbox (Deut. 28:15,22), and hail was normally reserved for His enemies (Ex. 9:18-34; Rev. 16:21). The people of Israel hadn't considered the connection between these judgments and their sin, but they were about to!

Consider It Done

God's people must have finally considered that He had brought these judgments on them, and repented in Haggai's day, for He went on to tell them to “consider *now*” something *different* about their chastening, something that would bring them *blessing*, and not cursing:

“Consider now from this day and upward...even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it.

“Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you” (Hag. 2:18,19).



There was no fruit on their trees, or seed in their barns, because they had sowed much but taken in little the year before, as we've seen. Their crops had yielded barely enough to eat (1:6), with nothing left over to store in the barn to plant the following year. And with no seed to plant, the prognosis for that year's crop was looking grim.

But here the prophet is calling on the people of Israel to “consider” their chastening for a different reason. Earlier it was to get them to repent by pointing out that God had been faithful to His promise to chasten them if they were disobedient. Here it was to get them to consider that God will now be *just as faithful to His promise to bless them*, now that they'd repented. That's why verse 19 ends with a promise of blessing.

This is similar to what the prophet Daniel did after his personal Bible study in the Book of Jeremiah made him realize that

Israel's 70 years in captivity were ending (Dan. 9:1,2). He remembered that God promised if His people confessed their sins after He scattered them among the heathen (Lev. 26:33), He would remember His covenant and forgive them (v. 40-42). So Daniel got busy confessing the sins of his people (v. 3-10), admitting that their sins had caused God to judge them (v. 11), and likewise admitting that in judging them, God was just confirming the covenant He had made with them (v. 12,13). He added that God had been "righteous" to do so (v. 14), for they *deserved* His judgment (v. 15). Then he wrote,

"O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness...let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem..." (v. 16).

In other words, Daniel was calling on God to be *just as righteous*, just as faithful to His

covenant, to *bless* His people now that they had repented as He had been when He *cursed* them when they disobeyed, in accord with *all* His righteousness.

And that is what God was asking Israel to consider in Haggai's day: that He would be just as faithful to bless them now that they had repented as He had been to judge them when they disobeyed.

Of course, if you tell a farmer with no seed in the barn to plant that he is going to have a blessed year, he will likely wonder if you've been playing football without a helmet. He knows the laws of nature can't promise that. But *Jewish* farmers knew that *the God* of nature could promise that, for His law *said* He would bless them when they repented, and "with God *nothing* shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). And you don't need a lawyer to tell you that! 



LIVING PROOF

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Eph. 6:24), but he also challenges us to "prove the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor. 8:8) by supporting the Lord's work financially. And if you remember *Berean Bible Society* in your will or trust, the proof of your love for the Lord can live on long after you're serving the Lord in person. You worked hard for your money, now let it work hard for the Lord. You'll be eternally glad you did.



Question Box

“2 Peter 3:15 says that Paul wrote a letter to the Hebrews to whom Peter was writing. Do we have that letter in Scripture?”

The letter Paul wrote to Peter’s readers must be part of Scripture, for in speaking of it, and “all” of Paul’s other epistles (v. 16), Peter went on to warn that “they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest*” those epistles, “as they do also the *other* Scriptures” (v. 16). So whatever epistle Paul wrote to Peter’s readers, it must be part of the canon of Scripture.

As to what epistle that might be, we know Peter wrote his second epistle to the same people to whom he wrote his first epistle, for in 2 Peter 3:1 he wrote,

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you...”

That means 2 Peter is written to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1), the same dispersed Jews he addressed in his first epistle. Paul wrote an epistle to people in Galatia, people who would then have circulated it to those other regions.

Of course, Paul wrote his epistle to members of the Body of Christ who lived in Galatia, believers who were looking forward to being raptured to heaven (2 Thes. 4:13-18; Titus 2:13), while Peter wrote to Hebrew kingdom saints who were looking forward to making “an entrance...into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord” (2 Pet. 1:11), i.e., the kingdom of heaven on earth. But God expected that the epistles of the New Testament would be circulated after they were received (Col. 4:16), so we know that Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians is the letter Peter had in mind in 2 Peter 3:15.

If it be asked what interest the kingdom saints to whom Peter wrote might have in reading Paul’s epistle to members of the Body of Christ, the answer is that they would know that “all Scripture is...profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16) if it is rightly divided (2:15). Because of that, those kingdom saints would read Paul’s epistles with the same interest we show when we teach Peter’s epistles, or other books of the Bible that pertain to Jewish kingdom saints.

2 Peter 3:15 is sometimes said to be a reference to the Book of Hebrews, and this verse is promoted as proof that Paul wrote Hebrews. However, the “salvation” that is the subject of the Book of Hebrews is one that “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed...by them that heard Him” (Heb. 2:3). The salvation spoken of by Paul in his epistles was part of the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19), a mystery that was *not* spoken of by the Lord while He was here on earth, nor confirmed by the Hebrews to whom He ministered (Matt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8). —Pastor Kurth



Reconciled to God

PASTOR DON HOSFELD

Contributing Writer

“But 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. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:8-10).

What is Reconciliation

The word reconciled means “to return to favor with” and can be understood as *made right* or *brought back into balance*. Webster’s 1824 dictionary defines it as “brought into friendship from a state of disagreement or enmity.”

For theologians, the *Doctrine of Reconciliation* can be turned into an unnecessarily complicated topic. But it is worth understanding that reconciliation differs from the doctrines of *sanctification* and even *salvation*. It is more than having our sins forgiven and God’s righteous judgment satisfied; it goes the next step and involves a changed relationship. Neither salvation nor forgiveness in and of themselves requires, or maybe better said, **speaks to**, a restored relationship. Being saved from God’s wrath doesn’t mean we have a restored relationship. The same is true for forgiveness. If you were to save someone from drowning, that salvation can leave you without a future relationship and certainly doesn’t mandate a **restored** relationship. Where forgiveness and salvation can have two parties go their separate ways, reconciliation restores the relationship. It is a coming together of those who are at variance or in disagreement.

The word reconciled teaches that man was at odds with God. And for those at odds or in conflict, fellowship can never be had until reconciliation is made. This was Job’s desire when he said, “*Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat*” (Job 23:3)!

Sometimes our greatest challenge when sharing the gospel is convincing people that they are at odds with God. Religion, not

understanding what “good” really is (Matt. 19:17), and rationalizing our actions lead many to think they do not need to have a restored relationship with God. But after speaking of reconciliation in Romans 5, verses 8-10, the apostle Paul makes it clear in verse 12 that we *ALL* need to be reconciled to God because of our relationship with Adam.

Why Do We Need to Be Reconciled

The entrance of sin destroyed the relationship man had with God. Man’s sin and the result of it cannot be blamed on another, even Adam, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). Still, man’s guilt extends beyond not achieving God’s standard. And lest any ever think God’s standard is wrong or that He expects too much, God declares that He did not walk away from man because of his sin. On the contrary, it is man that walked away from God. It is man that severed the relationship. It is man that *forgot God*.

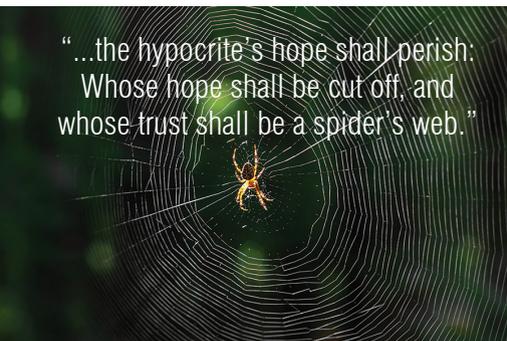
“*The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men*” (Psa. 33:13). And what did He see, “*every imagination...only evil continually*” (Gen. 6:5). These words do not just describe where men’s thoughts were, but where their thoughts were not. If every imagination and thought of man was *only* evil, then there was no room to think about God. As the Psalmist said, “*The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts*” (Psa. 10:4). God has looked down and found that man not only does evil works, but also gives no place in his heart or mind for his Creator. David says in Psalm 14:1, “*The fool has said in his heart, there is no God,*” then goes on in verses 2-3 to say, “*The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” *Gone aside* means to go away, desert, quit, or keep far away. So, from our passage, we can see that from God’s perspective, as He looks down from heaven to see if any have understanding and seek Him (v. 2), He finds that *all have gone aside* (v. 3), and He sees all have deserted Him. Interestingly, “*doing good*” in these verses involves seeking God.

Paul’s words to the religious and educated elite of Athens bring the issue forward, “*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That **they should seek the Lord**, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*”

If I were to put it simply, our Creator finds it offensive that His creation does not seek Him and instead ignores Him. This is why

He repeatedly warned the nation of Israel not to forget Him: *“beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage”* (Deut. 6:12) and *“now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver”* (Psa. 50:22). That may seem harsh, but God knows that man’s days are numbered and that He is man’s only salvation (*deliverer*) from the judgment to come. Apart from God, man cannot live eternally. This truth is illustrated to us in Job 8:11-14 *“Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish. Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web.”* Just as the rush (papyrus) must be in the mire (marsh) to grow, and just as the flag (marshy grass), if not in water, will wither and die, so too will any man that forgets God.

*“...the hypocrite’s hope shall perish:
Whose hope shall be cut off, and
whose trust shall be a spider’s web.”*



Reconciled to God

Knowing all this, it is David’s words about God that once again come to mind, *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him”* (Psa. 8:4)? The wonderful news is that despite our sin, despite our rejection of Him, God still wants us to be reconciled to Him. *“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”* (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

Sadly, many have bypassed Christ when trying to have fellowship with God. But we cannot be reconciled to the Father without the Son. In the opening chapter of Colossians, Paul says, *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled”* (Col. 1:21).

The “He” that reconciled us is Christ for it says, *“through the blood of His cross”* (v. 20) and *“in the body of His flesh through death”* (v. 22).

Nothing can bypass Christ, not even *“thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers”* (v. 16) because *“by Him [Christ] all things consist”* (v. 17). We usually think here of Christ holding things together, and He does, but Christ does more than hold things together; He brings things together. Thayer defines “consist” as *“to place together, to set*

in the same place, to bring or band together,” and Strongs adds the meaning of *“to introduce (favorably).”* So, as you can see, it is *by Christ* that we are reconciled to the Father. *“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father”* (Eph. 2:18). When we believe the gospel of the grace of God, our reconciliation to God is complete and permanent.

This reconciliation, our restored relationship, means we always have reason to *“rejoice evermore”* (1 Thes 5:16). 



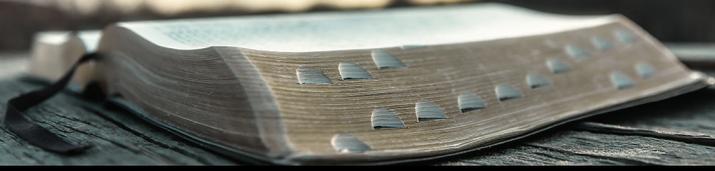
STUDENT *to* STUDENT

Today, I want to talk about seven words that start with “c” to encourage you with as they pertain to relationships, because if you’re college age like me, you’ve heard a lot about this subject lately. The words are Christ, courage, contentment, commitment, communication, compromise, and confidence.

Christ comes first in our priorities in a relationship, because He should be first in all aspects of our lives (Col. 1:18). Next is courage because we need courage to engage in any kind of relationship whether we’re shy or outgoing. Contentment is third, and this is important for relationships, because if you don’t learn to be content outside of a relationship, chances are you won’t be in a relationship. Fourth is commitment. It takes courage to commit to a relationship and that’s how all these “c”s build on one another to strengthen your relationship. Too often people will not commit to a relationship and therefore will not give any effort to it. Fifth is communication, because once you have committed to the relationship, you will engage in much needed communication for the relationship to grow. Honesty is important in a relationship whether you want to share the truth or not, because secrets can cause an unneeded division in your relationship. Sixth is compromise. After you start communicating, you’re going to start finding areas where you need to compromise, but one area you should never compromise in is your beliefs. There’s only one Man you should change your life for and it’s the One Who gave His for you. Last is confidence, because once you have accomplished all of these steps you can be confident in your relationship. Most of all you can be confident in Christ to lead your relationship, because you have prioritized Him first, and that’s how the cycle of the seven “c”s goes around and around. —Micah Kenney

THE GRACE REFERENCE BIBLE

A Preview of I Thessalonians 4



The following is an explanation of my notes in the upcoming Grace Reference Bible covering I Thessalonians 4.

PASTOR KEVIN SADLER
BBS President

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (I Thes 4:1).

As you look at the page from our Grace Reference Bible on page 18, you will notice the title that I gave this chapter is “A Call to Holiness.” This is based on verse 7 of this important chapter. The way for each of us in the Church “to walk and to please God” is to live according to God’s call for holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In our reference Bible, the superscript *letters* direct the reader to the left and right side columns, while the superscript *numbers* direct one to the notes at the bottom of the page. At the start of each *chapter* (not each page), the letters and numbers start over with *a* and *1*.

The sidenote letter *a* in verse 1 pertains to the words, “to please

God,” and gives the cross-references to “Jn. 8:29; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:6.” John 8:29 are Christ’s words, “...for I do always those things that *please Him*.” It is Christ-like for us to walk to *please God* in our lives and service. And Hebrews 11:6 tells us that faith pleases God and “without faith it is impossible to *please Him*.”

“For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (I Thes 4:2).

In verse 2, the sidenote letter *b* is in regard to the word, “commandments.” The cross-reference is I Corinthians 14:37, in which Paul wrote “that the things that I write unto you are *the commandments of the Lord*.” The note I put after the reference to this verse is, “All of the epistles of Paul are ‘commandments...by the Lord Jesus,’ the Head of the Church, for the Body of Christ.” It’s important for all in the Body of Christ to recognize the fact that the writings of Paul are the

a. Jn. 8:29; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:6.
 b. I Cor. 14:37. All of the epistles of Paul are "commandments... by the Lord Jesus," the Head of the Church, for the Body of Christ.
 c. Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 5:17; I Thes. 5:18. The will of God is found in the Word of God. Verse 3 teaches that God's will is that the Church be sanctified.

Sanctification

d. *Gr. porneia.* Refers to any form of sexual impurity. I Cor. 6:13; Eph. 5:3.
 e. Our bodies. See II Cor. 4:7; II Tim. 2:20-21.
 f. *desire for what is forbidden.*
 g. Eph. 4:17-19.
 h. Rom. 12:19; II Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:25.
 i. God has called us to be like Him. Rom. 6:19; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:24; I Pet. 1:15-16.
 j. Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 6:19; II Tim. 1:14. The Holy Spirit is "given" as a gift of grace to believers.
 k. *Gr. philadelphia.*
 l. Rom. 5:5, 8; 13:8; Gal. 5:13.

A Call to Holiness CHAPTER 4

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God,^a so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments^b we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God,^c even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:^d

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel^e in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence,^f even as the Gentiles^g which know not God:

6 That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such,^h as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.ⁱ

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.^j

9 But as touching brotherly love^k ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God^l to love^m one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia:ⁿ but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;^o

11 And that ye study^p to be quiet,^q and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands,^r as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly^s toward them that are without,^t and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

The Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant,² brethren, concerning them which are asleep,³ that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.⁴

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,⁵ even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.⁶

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,⁷ that we which are alive⁸ and remain unto the coming of

m. Gr. agapao.

n. Not only had their faith in God spread through Macedonia (I Thes. 1:8), so had their love.

o. I Thes. 3:12. Love is not an achievement. We "increase" in God's love and are to demonstrate it continually. There is always room for spiritual growth with love.

p. *strive earnestly, make it one's aim.*

q. I Tim. 2:2.

r. II Thes. 3:10-12.

s. *decently.*

t. Col. 4:5; I Tim. 3:7. Unbelievers; those "without" Christ, "without" eternal life.

u. "No hope" of reunion. Unbelievers have no hope of the Rapture or of reunion with their deceased loved ones.

v. I Thes. 3:13. Christ will return with the souls of the members of the Body of Christ.

w. "We which are alive" teaches that the Rapture is an imminent hope for the Body of Christ. Paul and the Thessalonians

1. (4:8) All members of the Trinity are mentioned in 4:1-8: Father (vv. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8), Son (vv. 1, 2, 6), and Holy Spirit (v. 8). All three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the sanctification of the believer. God the Father calls us to sanctification (v. 7). God the Son gives commands for it (v. 2). God the Holy Spirit empowers a holy walk that pleases God (v. 8).

2. (4:13) The Thessalonians were "ignorant" as to what happens to a believer who had died when Christ comes for the Body of Christ. They were concerned that the departed dead would miss the Rapture because they will be not here when the Lord returns.

3. (4:13) "Asleep" refers to those who have died. See Jn. 11:11-14; Acts 7:60. The Bible does *not* teach soul sleep (II Cor. 5:8). "Asleep" is a hopeful term, because sleeping assumes a future awakening. Like sleep, the death of the body is temporary. One day, the lifeless body of the believer will awake from death in the resurrection and be changed at the Rapture.

4. (4:14) These are the terms of salvation for the dispensation of grace (I Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 1:13; 2:8-9). By this qualification, we learn that the Rapture is *only* for the Church, the Body of Christ. Faith alone in the gospel that "Jesus died and rose again" is what places a person into the Body of Christ and gives its members the certain hope of the Rapture.

5. (4:15) The truth of the Rapture is based on a special, divine revelation, revealed *first* to the Apostle Paul. As Paul wrote about this revelation in I Corinthians 15:51, "Behold, I shew you a mystery [secret]...." The Rapture is not found in the Old Testament or the Gospels. Being unrevealed before Paul, it necessitated a new revelation, "by the word of the Lord."

commandments of Christ for His Church under grace.

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (I Thes. 4:3).

Two sidenote letters are found in this verse. The first, the letter *c*, is on the phrase “the will of God,” giving references regarding God’s will in other places in Paul’s epistles. The note reads, “The will of God is found in the Word of God. Verse 3 teaches that God’s will is that the Church be sanctified.” Also, you will notice in the left hand column that the word “Sanctification” appears in bold. This directs the reader to an index in the back of the Bible that deals with various topics. The write-ups in the index will give a brief overview of that particular subject, and they also direct the reader to grace literature where one can learn more.

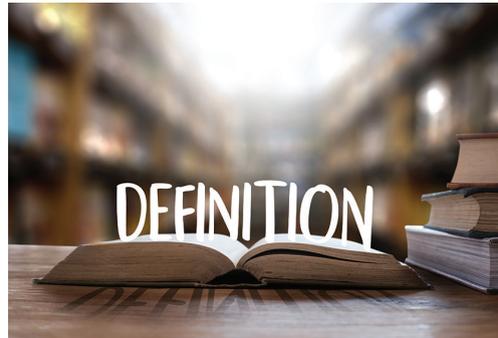
The letter *d* in verse 3 is on the word “fornication.” It is also God’s will that members of Christ’s Body “abstain from fornication.” The Greek word translated as “fornication” is *porneia*, from which we get our word *pornography*. The term refers to any form of sexual impurity. The references, “I Cor. 6:13; Eph. 5:3,” are additional verses which teach that it is God’s will that believers abstain from fornication: “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (I Cor. 6:13).

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (I Thes. 4:4).

In verse 4, clarification is given concerning the word “vessel.” The term, “vessel,” as sidenote *e* points out, is referring to “Our bodies. See II Cor. 4:7; II Tim. 2:20-21.” Speaking of the treasure of the “glorious gospel of Christ” (II Cor. 4:4), Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:7 that “we have this treasure in earthen *vessels*,” that is, the vessels of our bodies.

“Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (I Thes. 4:5).

In verse 5, we find a word that isn’t part of our everyday vocabulary. The Grace Reference Bible will give definitions for uncommon words when the reader



might be unsure of a meaning. The letter *f* on this word gives a definition for concupiscence: “desire for what is forbidden.” Sidenote *g* gives a reference for “Gentiles,” the Gentiles “which know not God.” In Ephesians 4:17-19, Paul similarly challenged the Body of Christ to “walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind...Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

“That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified” (I Thes. 4:6).

In verse 6, the superscript *h* is on the phrase “that the Lord is the avenger of all such.” Paul is writing to the Body of Christ, and he states that for one who defrauds “his brother” in Christ, the Lord will be the avenger or the one carrying out justice. The reference “Rom. 12:19” is a verse that confirms God’s avenging character to give just retribution when wrong is done: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” The other two references “II Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:25” point to the Judgment Seat of Christ, where each believer will give an account before the Lord of their conduct and service, “that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10).

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (I Thes. 4:7).

Being “called...unto holiness,” the note indicated by the letter *i* states, “God has called us to be like Him. Rom. 6:19; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:24; I Pet. 1:15-16.” God is holy. We are holy in Christ. But in our practical sanctification, God has called us to be holy as the references further demonstrate: “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting *holiness* in the fear of God” (II Cor. 7:1).

“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who

hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (I Thes. 4:8).

Verse 8 has both a sidenote letter and a footnote number. The letter is about the word “given” in this verse which teaches that “the Holy Spirit is ‘given’ as a gift of grace to believers.” The references of “Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 6:19; II Tim. 1:14” teach that all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

The footnote number 1 on the bottom reads, “(4:8) All members of the Trinity are mentioned in 4:1-8: Father (vv. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8), Son (vv. 1, 2, 6), and Holy Spirit (v. 8). All three Persons of the Godhead



are involved in the sanctification of the believer. God the Father calls us to sanctification (v. 7). God the Son gives commands for it (v. 2). God the Holy Spirit empowers a holy walk that pleases God (v. 8).”

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (I Thes. 4:9).

Two different Greek words for “love” are used in this passage. The letter *k* points out that “brotherly love” is the “Gr. *philadelphia*,” while the letter

m shows that the word “love” in “love one another” is the “Gr. *agapao*.” The reference “Rom. 5:5,8” under the letter *l* in between these two notes explains *how* we “are taught of God to love one another”: “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” and because “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:13” are other passages that teach us “to love one another.”

“And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more” (I Thes. 4:10).

Letter *n* in verse 10 makes a connection to Paul’s previous mention of Macedonia in this letter, hence the comment, “Not only had their faith in God spread through Macedonia (I Thes. 1:8), so had their love.” The sidenote *o* connects Paul’s challenge to “increase” in love with something else Paul wrote previously in this letter. The cross reference, “I Thes. 3:12” reads, “And the Lord

toward all men....” What these verses teach us is, as the note says, “Love is not an achievement. We ‘increase’ in God’s love and are to demonstrate it continually. There is always room for spiritual growth with love.”

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (I Thes. 4:11).

This verse has three footnote letters. Letter *p* gives clarity to the word “study” in verse 11: “strive earnestly, make it one’s aim.” Sidenote *q* connects the word “quiet” with “I Tim. 2:2” and Paul’s desire for the Church, “that we may lead a *quiet* and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” And letter *r*. “II Thes. 3:10-12” refers to the Thessalonians becoming so occupied with waiting “for His [God’s] Son from heaven” (I Thes. 1:10) that some quit working or were not taking care of their daily responsibilities. This problem persisted and resulted in Paul writing in his second letter to them, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.”

“That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (I Thes. 4:12).

In verse 12, the letter and note, “*s. decently*” is a help to give understanding to the word, “honestly.” And the *t* note is given to define who “them that



make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and

are without” are: “Col. 4:5; I Tim. 3:7. Unbelievers; those ‘without’ Christ, ‘without’ eternal life.”

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (I Thes. 4:13).

As the subject turns to the Lord’s return, a new title is given before verse 13: “The Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ.” Footnote number 2 is on the word “ignorant” in verse 13 and explains what the Thessalonians were ignorant of: “2. (4:13) The Thessalonians were ‘ignorant’ as to what happens to a believer who had died when Christ comes for the Body of Christ. They were concerned that the departed dead would miss the Rapture since they are not here when the Lord returns.”



Footnote number 3 is on the word “asleep.” This note addresses the erroneous teaching of soul sleep and explains the hope that this term gives to the believer: “3. (4:13) ‘Asleep’ refers to those who have died. See Jn. 11:11-14; Acts 7:60. The Bible does *not* teach soul sleep (II Cor. 5:8). ‘Asleep’ is a hopeful term, because sleeping

assumes a future awakening. Like sleep, the death of the body is temporary. One day, the lifeless body of the believer will awake from death in the resurrection and be changed at the Rapture.”

The sidenote letter *u* concerns the words “no hope.” Paul is addressing the concerns of the Thessalonians about the place of their departed loved ones at the Rapture and being reunited with them. Thus, in this context, “no hope” means, “‘No hope’ of *reunion*. Unbelievers have no hope of the Rapture or of reunion with their deceased loved ones.” This is a very sad thought and is a motivation for the Church to share the gospel of grace with others.

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (I Thes. 4:14).

Footnote number 4 addresses Paul’s words, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again”: “4. (4:14) These are the terms of salvation for the dispensation of grace (I Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 1:13; 2:8-9). By this qualification, we learn that the Rapture is *only* for the Church, the Body of Christ. Faith alone in the gospel that ‘Jesus died and rose again’ is what places a person into the Body of Christ and gives its members the certain hope of the Rapture.”

Letter *v* in this verse is for the purpose of clarifying the meaning of the second half of verse 14. At the close of the previous chapter, Paul wrote of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *with all His saints*” (I Thes. 3:13). This is what Paul referred to when he wrote of

expected it, and we too are to expect it anytime.

x. *precede.*

y. Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1.

z. *an order to soldiers by a commander.* See Jn. 11:43-44.

aa. Michael. See Jude v. 9.

bb. I Cor. 15:52. A trumpet of assembly, which signifies the close of this age.

cc. I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14.

dd. *to seize eagerly, snatch, or claim for one's self.*

ee. "Together with them" means to be with the souls that come with Christ from heaven (I Thes. 4:14).

a. Isa. 13:6-11; Jer. 46:10; Zeph. 1:14-18.

b. The simile of "a thief in the night" describes the Day of the Lord (II Pet. 3:10) and the Second Coming (Matt. 24:42-43; Rev. 6:15), but *never* the Rapture.

c. The Tribulation begins with a short time of deceptive peace and security; and the Anti-Christ will begin his reign of terror as a man of peace (Dan. 11:21).

the Lord shall not prevent^e them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend^f from heaven^g with a shout,^h with the voice of the archangel,^{aa} and with the trump of God:^{bb} and the dead in Christ shall rise^{cc} first:

17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up^{dd} together with them^{ee} in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Day of the Lord
CHAPTER 5

1 But¹ of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord^a so cometh as a thief in the night.^b

3 For when they² shall say, Peace and safety;^c then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child;^d and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness,^e that that day should overtake you as a thief.^f

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the

day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope^g of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,³

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep,⁴ we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort^b yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord,ⁱ and admonish you;^j

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly,^k comfort the feeble-

d. Jer. 30:6-7.

e. Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:15.

f. The Day of the Lord will not overtake us, the Body of Christ, as a thief because we will have been caught up to heaven before it begins.

g. We are to reach out to the world with faith, love, and hope in view of the Rapture and the judgment that follows it in the Tribulation.

b. Notice that I Thes. 4:18 and 5:1-11 are bracketed by "comfort." The catching away of the Church to heaven is comforting, and the truth that we're not going through the Tribulation is also comforting.

i. Heb. 13:7; I Pet. 5:1-3.

j. Paul lists 4 important qualities for spiritual leadership:

- (1) to "labour" and work hard;
- (2) to be "among" the Lord's people;
- (3) to be "over" and overseeing, giving biblical guidance; and
- (4) to "admonish" and give counsel by the Word of God.

1. (5:1) The teaching of I Thessalonians 5:1-3 refers to subsequent events from the Rapture, not concurrent. Our Lord will first come to take His Church out of the world (4:13-18), and this is followed by the judgment of the Day of the Lord in the 7-year Tribulation (5:1-3).

2. (5:3) I Thessalonians 4:13-18 concern us, believers in the Church, the Body of Christ. Thus, the pronoun "we" is used four times in relation to our hope of the Rapture (vv. 14, 15, 17). However, in 5:3, the pronouns change to "they" and "them." The "they" and "them" are the unbelieving left behind after the Rapture.

3. (5:9) In this context, the "wrath" is the wrath of God that will be poured out on the world during the Day of the Lord. Christians are not appointed to this Day, but instead we are appointed "to obtain salvation," that is, the sure hope of deliverance from the Tribulation, "by our Lord Jesus Christ," Who personally comes to catch us up to heaven at the Rapture (I Thes. 4:16).

4. (5:10) "Wake" is translated from the same Greek word as "watch" in I Thessalonians 5:6 (Gr. *gregoreuo*). "Sleep" is not the "sleep" of death (4:14), but rather "sleep" is translated from the same Greek word as "sleep" in 5:6 (Gr. *kathudo*). What Paul is teaching is that whether believers are spiritually awake or asleep, we will all be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to forever live together with Him. Our eternal salvation does not depend on what we do or do not do, but on the fact that Christ "died for us" and that we trusted in Him.

“them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him” (4:14). Thus, as note *v* states, “Christ will return with the souls of the members of the Body of Christ.”

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep” (I Thes. 4:15).

The phrase “by the word of the Lord” is an important note in our Grace Reference Bible, because this coming of Christ was *unknown* before Paul. Subjects like the Rapture fall into place when one understands the revelation given to Paul for the Body of Christ under grace. Footnote number 5 reads, “5. (4:15) The truth of the Rapture is based on a special, divine revelation, revealed *first* to the Apostle Paul. As Paul wrote about this revelation in I Corinthians 15:51: ‘Behold, I shew you a mystery [secret]....’ The Rapture is not found in the Old Testament or the Gospels. Being unrevealed before

reminder for the Church that the Rapture could take place today and any day (Titus 2:13), thus “*w*. ‘We which are alive’ teaches that the Rapture is an imminent hope for the Body of Christ. Paul and the Thessalonians expected it, and we too are to expect it anytime.”

As we continue, on page 23 of this issue is a second page of the Grace Reference Bible. At the top left, sidenote *x* defines the word “prevent” as *precede*. When you read verse 15 with this meaning of “prevent” in mind, you can better understand the order of events at the Rapture, because as Paul wrote in the next verse, “the dead in Christ shall rise *first*.”

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thes. 4:16).

In verse 16, the letter *y* is on the phrase “descend from heaven.” The references, “Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1” show that this is currently where Christ resides and is ministering to the Body of Christ as our exalted and living Head (Col. 2:19). It also reminds us that heaven is *above*, which is why Christ must “*descend* from heaven.” As Colossians 3:1 reads, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are *above*, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Sidenote letter *z* expands on the word “shout” as “an order to soldiers by a commander. See Jn. 11:43-44.” When the Lord raised His friend Lazarus from



The *Rapture* was something once hidden, until it was fully revealed to Paul alone.

Paul, it necessitated a new revelation, ‘by the word of the Lord.’”

Letter *w* on the words, “we which are alive,” is an important

the dead, He did so with a shout: “And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a *loud voice*, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth...” (John 11:43-44). Likewise, at the Rapture, the Lord will shout an order to call forth the bodies of the dead in Christ from their graves.

Superscript letters *aa* is on “archangel.” The voice of the archangel, Michael, will be heard at the Rapture. Jude 1:9 names Michael as the archangel, “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil...” At the Rapture, Michael’s voice will be heard because he again will be contending with the devil, for our path to heaven goes straight through enemy territory (Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

Footnote letters *bb* concern “the trump of God” at the Rapture: “I Cor. 15:52. A trumpet of assembly, which signifies the close of this age.” At the Rapture, Christ summons His ambassadors and gathers all the Body of Christ together in one place: heaven. He does so to close this age prior to resuming His dealings with Israel which begin with “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), the prophesied seven-year Tribulation.

The references “I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14” under sidenote letters *cc* are about the Rapture being resurrection day for the saints in the Body of Christ. Our Savior will raise the dead bodies

of the members of His Church by the power and authority of God: “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus...” (II Cor. 4:14).

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thes. 4:17-18).

In verse 17, sidenote letters *dd* are on the words “caught up.” This phrase is here defined from the original Greek and means “to eagerly seize, snatch, or claim for one’s self.” This is what Christ does with members of His Body at the Rapture as He catches us up “in the clouds,” “in the air,” in order to bring us home to heaven.

Sidenote *ee* explains who the “them” is in verse 17: “Together with them’ means to be with the souls that come with Christ from heaven (I Thes. 4:14).” Verse 14 states, “even so THEM also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” The “them” are all members of Christ’s body who are currently with Him in heaven, including our saved loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord. At the Rapture, we will meet the Lord, be reunited with our saved ones, and be gathered together with all the Body of Christ. It’s no wonder that Paul calls it “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13)! 

Please be in prayer for the Grace Reference Bible.

If you would like to donate toward this important project, please designate your gift to the “Grace Bible.”

BBS

Letter Excerpts



From Georgia:

“The grace church near me is about a two hour drive. You have helped in ways that have lifted up my life. Thank you Lord Jesus.”

From our Inbox:

“Thank you so much! You have no idea what hearing back from you means to me—an answer to prayer for sure!”

From North Carolina:

“I don’t miss much in this life, but I do miss my *Two Minutes* in the morning if it isn’t there. Prayer, followed by *Two Minutes* and coffee, to jump-start my day!” (The best part of waking up is *Two Minutes* in your box! –Ed.)

From Illinois:

“I would like to get *Things That Differ*, and Pastor Stam’s commentary on Acts as well....I’m 70 years old, and just now learning the truth of the Bible....Please continue to feed me, so that I might grow in grace.”

From the Philippines:

“I am a grace pastor with *Things To Come Mission*....‘Now That I Believe’...I find helpful in my Bible study, and with the new converts in our church.”

From North Dakota:

“*Transformed by Grace* is such a blessing to us! Pastor Kevin Sadler has such a gift of explaining God’s Word in such a simple way....Thank you for helping us rightly divide the Word!”

From Facebook:

“Oh what a blessing for this to pop up on my Facebook page. I watch this program every day on TV. I love Brother Kevin. I am being so blessed by hearing the Word divided as it should be.”

From Spain:

“I came across a YouTube teaching of yours about grace, and I really liked it. I am over 60 years of age but a new Christian....Does your magazine get shipped to Spain?... Can you recommend some books for a beginner please?”

From South Carolina:

“We watch *Transformed by Grace* not only for the truth being taught, but also because your love for God’s Word and your sweet spirit really shine through.” (The grace message is the truth, and Pastor Kevin knows that being gracious is the way to present it [Col. 4:6]! –Ed.)

From Texas:

“Thank you, Pastor Sadler, for your wonderful teaching. I learn so much each week from you.”

From Iowa:

“As I wait in hospitals, clinics, and at my wife’s dialysis sessions, Bible study is a blessing. Your resource material gives me guidance to stay on track in rightly dividing Scripture. The references allow me to be a Berean, and to know the correct answer by checking my Bible. Thank you so much!”

From Virginia:

“It seems that I stumble through a lot of what I read, but BBS is a great resource to keep me on the right path.”

From Texas:

“This donation comes very short of the value of what BBS, Pastor Kevin, and Pastor Kurth have given me.”

From Connecticut:

“It is with great excitement that I am enclosing a check from the recent sale of my house, to help with the grace Bible project. I had hoped and prayed for something like this to happen, and now, I’m so stoked! I’m also praying that all will go well, and there won’t be any undue delays.”

From our Inbox:

“This *Two Minutes* message [“The Hour of Power”]...from Mr. Ricky Kurth is one of the most misguided messages of error that I have ever heard of or read. Because of this I will have to delete *The Berean Bible Society* from my inbox.”

From California:

“Excellent article [“The Hour of Power”].”

From Missouri:

“I really appreciate your help and would like to contact you with further studies in ‘dispensations.’ Since you were here in Salem, Missouri, one other member and I are using the book *Things That Differ* for a weekly Bible study. We appreciate the new Biblical perspective we are being given.” (We’re glad to partner with Pastor Wayne Werline of *New Hope Church* in Salem, in teaching the perspective of “rightly dividing the Word.”—Ed.)

From Maine:

“The items I have ordered and received from your ministry have been a true blessing to me and many in our Bible group.”

From Florida:

“When I was first...introduced to the grace message, I wanted to spend all my time in Paul’s epistles. I gradually came to appreciate how important the Old Testament was and its value to me. I have read it twice...marveling at your comparison of Moses and Joshua and their types of Christ. In my own effort I would never have seen and appreciated this contrast.”

From Minnesota:

“This is a fantastic article [“Preaching Christ From the Shadows”] explaining how Israel’s heritage *screams* of our Lord...Pastor Kurth hit a home run with this one. Don’t tell him I used a baseball reference. His White Sox are still behind my Twins.” (See Matthew 19:30. —Ed.)

From New York:

“I read the four volume books on *Revelation*. What a blessing to read how the Bible comes to a completion in eternity future!”

From our Inbox:

“I remember in 1999 I was driving by BBS to go to my new bank a few blocks away, and saw the ‘Christ Died For Your Sins’ sign on your building. It didn’t take long before I stopped in and was introduced to the Gospel of Grace through the pamphlets I purchased. Praise God BBS is still preaching the Gospel according to the revelation of the mystery!”

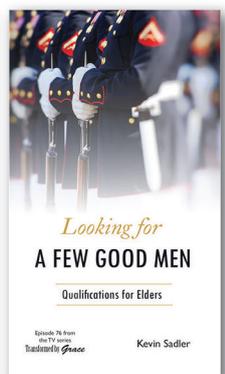
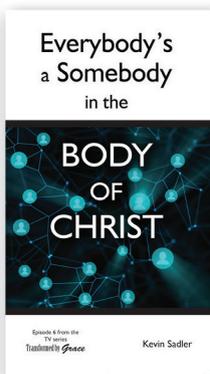
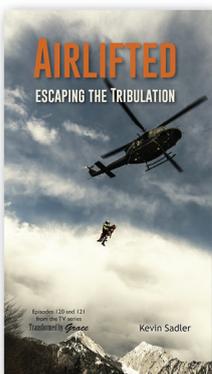
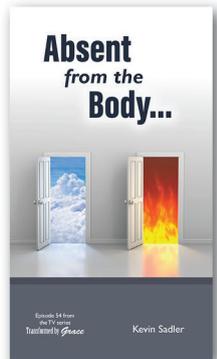
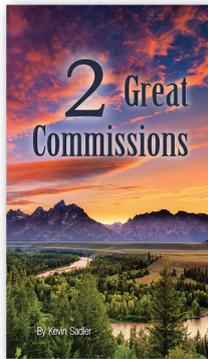
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“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

—Acts 17:11

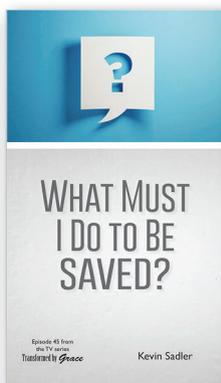
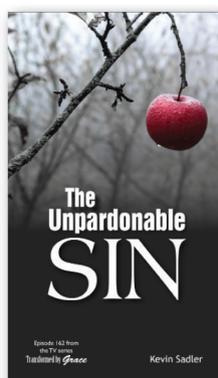
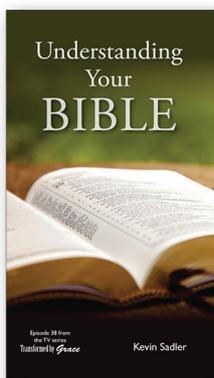
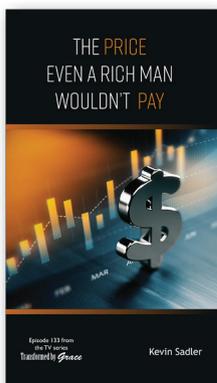
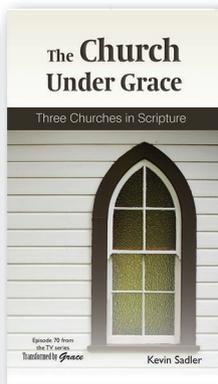
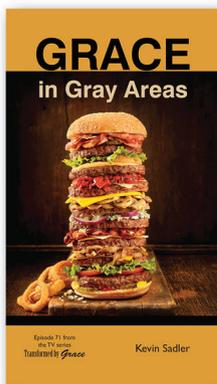
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News and Announcements

Give Me Five! That's what we've been saying since our *Transformed By Grace* television ministry first began airing four days a week. But our broadcast hour was already occupied on Thursday—until now! When it recently became available, we were on it like a hobo on a hot dog. Of course, we were only able to capitalize on this new opportunity thanks to your faithful financial support of our ministry. So rejoice with us as we rejoice (Rom. 12:15), and pray that those who tune in expecting to see the former ministry's broadcast will come to a knowledge of the truth.

Give Me Greece! That's what our readers have been clamoring ever since the *Footsteps of Paul* tour that we planned for September of 2020 had to be postponed that year due to Covid concerns and travel restrictions. In response, we're pleased to announce that we are working to reschedule this tour, with the target dates falling sometime in late 2023 or early 2024. If you've ever dreamed of tracing the ministry of the Apostle Paul through cities such as Athens, Corinth, Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi, Neapolis, Amphipolis, and Appolonia, we'll be announcing more about your opportunity to do just that in the months to come.

BBF Fall Conference: The leadership of the *Berean Bible Fellowship* would love to welcome you to the conference we here at BBS like to refer to as the fall classic! This year, the gracious grace believers of *Grace Bible Church* in Beloit, Wisconsin, have opened their facilities to host guest speakers Kevin Sadler, Ricky Kurth, John Fredericksen, Jeff Bertram, Robert Nix, and Don Hosfeld. Set October 7-9 aside, and email them at gracebiblechurchbeloit@gmail.com, or call Michelle at 608-295-5368 to learn more.

Amateur Hour! Amateur radio operator Jason Randolph would like to hear from grace believers who share his passion for this unique form of communication. If you're not familiar with what is sometimes referred to as "ham" radio, think of it as shortwave radio with the ability to transmit messages around the world, instead of just receive them. Ham operators are licensed by the FCC, and in the past have proven invaluable when severe weather or natural disasters wiped out other means of communication. In addition, missionaries employed ham radio to keep in touch with loved ones at home. If you'd like to help Jason start up an amateur radio grace fellowship, his call sign is K7ETB, but you can email him at k7etb@tidelink.net.



UPCOMING CONFERENCES TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

BBF Fall Conference, October 7-9, Beloit, WI



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