

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

October 2005



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The **Purpose** of the *Berean Bible Society* is to help you understand and enjoy the Bible. The **Mission** of BBS is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by proclaiming the whole counsel of God according to the revelation of the Mystery. Our **Goals** are to *evangelize* the lost, to *educate* the saved in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15), to *energize* their Christian lives, and to *encourage* the local church.

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

There has been a new addition to the Sadler family circle. Tyler Paul made his entrance into the world on June 21st. I was attending the *Berean Bible Fellowship Conference* in Cedar Lake, Indiana when I received word of Tyler's arrival and briefly returned home to see our new grandson. My wife and I have now had the distinct honor of holding all four of our grandchildren on the day they were born.

I don't know about your grandchildren, but ours are all "live wires," and we are sure that Tyler is going to add some additional voltage! Vicki and I have both commented that, what one doesn't think of, the other one does. Of course, little ones don't think like we adults, so you never know what's going to pop out of them. Here are a few examples:

On the way over to visit Nana and Pap-pap, Kevin and Jessie passed a farm that had black and white and brown and white cows. As they went by Cody said: "Dad, I like the brown cows, because they make good chocolate milk!"

One afternoon when Nana was putting Katie and Carissa to bed for a nap, she laid down the law: "There will be no talking, no playing, and you must stay in your beds." To which Katie replied: "Okay, Nana, I'll just breathe!"

Carissa, our little 3-year-old gymnast, took a spill the other day. She promptly told Mom that she had a *boo-boo*. Mom consoled her and told Carissa that she would kiss it to make it all better. Without a moment's hesitation Carissa exclaimed, "*No*, I already did!" I guess she felt she needed immediate first aid!

Our dear little Tyler hasn't joined the family antics yet, but we *are sure* he will soon enough! We'll keep you up to date!

When we consider our children and our grandchildren in light of the biblical injunction to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it gives new meaning to the importance of our Sunday School Curriculum program. Thanks so very much to everyone who is involved in this project. Your dedication to this undertaking hasn't gone unnoticed, as we labor together to produce sound Grace educational materials for all age groups.

Affectionately, in Christ,
Grandpa & Grandma Sadler

Mailbag Extra

At the top of every *Searchlight* “Mailbag” (See pages 26,27), we cite Acts 14:27:

“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

Here we see Paul and Barnabas gathering their friends and supporters together to rehearse all that God had done through their apostolic efforts. Similarly, our “Mailbag” page offers us the opportunity to share with you, our friends and supporters, all that God has been doing through our efforts. However, some of the encouraging letters we receive are too long to fit into a “Mailbag” letter excerpt. Hence it is our privilege on this page to occasionally share these lengthier letters with you for your encouragement and blessing:



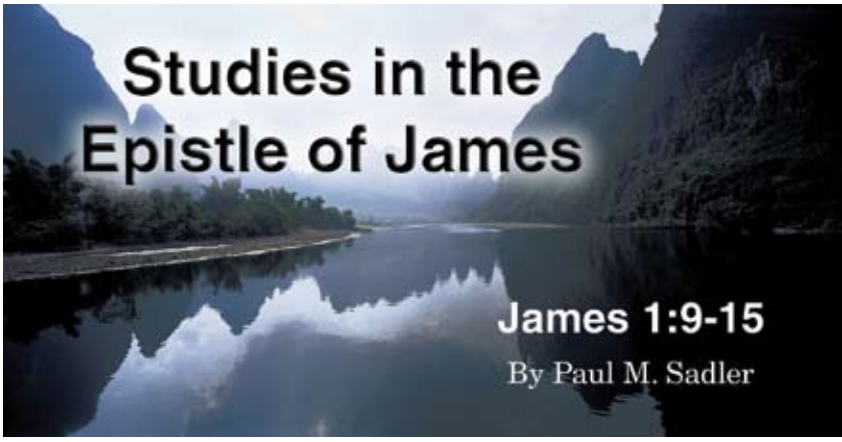
From Missouri:

“We would like for you to send us Pastor Stam’s paper, *Weekly Bible Classes: How to Conduct Them Effectively*. We have recently moved away from our home in Tennessee, where we had the grand opportunity to go to a Grace church. Here in Missouri, we can’t find one. So, we are very interested in this pamphlet.

“We appreciate your studies so much. The Word, rightly divided has changed our hearts and home. I had been taught about the unpardonable sin ever since I was about 14 years old. Since the very first time I heard of the existence of a sin that couldn’t be forgiven, I was haunted. I couldn’t sleep; each night I tried to keep my mind busy until I was so exhausted I would finally sleep. For about twenty years I was hit with this; each year I was getting worse. Then at one point I thought I had committed speaking against the Holy Ghost. I gave up on others too. I thought people were speaking against Him left and right.

“At the age of 33, with a husband and two children that I was about to leave because of what I thought I’d done, I finally heard the Grace message. Praise the Lord, I heard the beautiful words that ALL my sins had been paid for, even the ones that couldn’t have been forgiven under the Law.

“So for one who was suicidal, and about to leave the sweetest family in the world, I am so thankful for your ministry. You help folks see that they can truly have victory in Jesus because of His death, burial and resurrection. If we ever have extra money, I want to support your ministry. It truly is the best ministry I know!”



Studies in the Epistle of James

James 1:9-15

By Paul M. Sadler

“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.”

—James 1:9,10

A little boy was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the backyard, baseball cap in place, toting ball and bat. He was heard to say, “I’m the greatest hitter in the world.” Then he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it and missed. “Strike one!” Undaunted he picked up the ball, threw it into the air and said to himself—“I’m the greatest baseball hitter ever,” and swung at the ball again. And again he missed. “Strike two!” He paused a moment to examine his bat and ball carefully. Then a third time he threw the ball into the air. “I’m the greatest hitter who ever lived,” he said. He swung the bat hard again, missed a third time. He cried out, “Wow! Strike three! What a pitcher! I’m the greatest pitcher in the world!”¹

Now here’s a little guy who turned the disappointment of not

being a Hall of Fame hitter into a favorable experience. Rather than dwelling on the circumstances in which he found himself, he looked on the bright side that he was the greatest pitcher in the world—out of defeat came victory! What a great attitude!

In similar fashion, James wanted his readers to have the proper attitude about worldly possessions. He begins with the poor among them: “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted.” It is important to bear in mind that the apostle is writing to those of the little flock who had been under the control of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These were the very ones that had sold their lands, houses, and possessions and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:32-37). Shortly thereafter, however, the leaders in Israel rejected their Messiah and stoned Stephen who had pleaded with them to receive the Anointed One (Acts 7:59,60).

The persecution that ensued after the stoning of God’s spokesman resulted in these kingdom

saints being scattered throughout the nations of the world. As God turned to the Gentiles, He gradually withdrew His blessing from the chosen nation. This left these Hebrew believers destitute! In the course of time, many of these dear saints struggled to make ends meet, due in part to the difficulty of integrating themselves into a foreign culture. But James didn't want them to dwell on their poverty; therefore, he redirects their attention to the *exalted* position they possessed in the kingdom. He wanted them to live above the disappointing circumstances in which they found themselves. After all, they were a royal priesthood! (I Pet. 2:9). They may have been poor concerning the things of this world, but they were rich in regard to the inheritance that awaited them. James encouraged them to remember the following promise:

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?” (James 2:5).

It is our tendency in the family of God to dwell on our problems and not be as mindful as we should about the blessings we enjoy in Christ. But thankfully there are exceptions. Many years ago I had an opportunity to lead a young lady named Marie to the Lord at one of our weekly Bible studies. As a result of her faithful testimony a number of her family members came to know Christ, including her husband and daughter. Marie suffered

from childhood diabetes, which eventually took its toll. She gradually lost her sight, her kidneys failed leading to a kidney transplant, and she had to have both of her legs amputated below the knee. Along with other serious complications, this was followed by losing four of her fingers to the disease.

Every time my wife and I visited Marie, whether at home or in the hospital, we came away edified. We never once heard her complain about her condition, even though she was obviously in discomfort at times. When we were in her presence, the entire time was spent talking about the things of the Lord. She always marveled at the grace of God that was extended to her in salvation. Marie is now with the Lord and her sweet spirit is fondly remembered by all of us who had the privilege of knowing her. I shared at her Memorial Service how “our lives touch the lives of others” and this was certainly true of Marie; even her attending physician and members of her medical team were present. They, too, marveled at her inner strength.

This was the very thing James desired for his hearers; in spite of their adversity, in this case poverty, they were to have the right attitude. I recently heard a Christian radio announcer state: “Life is ten percent what happens to you, and ninety percent how you respond.” How true! Now the apostle addresses the rich among them along the same lines.

“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But

the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (James 1:9-11).

James normally has little good to say about the rich, who in his day had a propensity to oppress the Lord’s people. In fact, he often speaks of them in the context of *unbelief* (James 2:6,7; 5:1-6). Here in Chapter one, however, I believe the apostle is addressing those of the household of faith who were rich. Mitton states: “The word ‘brother’ in the original Greek stands right at the beginning of the whole sentence, and it is most natural to understand it as referring to both parts of the sentence, and to translate it: ‘Let the brother who is poor...and the brother who is rich...’”² Furthermore, this seems to be the sense of verse 12 where James concludes: “Blessed is the man,” that is, whether rich or poor, “that endureth temptation [trials], for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

Notice James says regarding the rich “in that he is made low.” There is nothing inherently wrong in itself with being wealthy. Many wealthy believers faithfully serve the Lord and generously support His work with their resources. But James wanted to remind the rich that they should not place their confidence in uncertain

riches, which would be their natural tendency. Having come to know Christ as Savior and Lord was, to say the least, a *humbling* experience. Suddenly their realm of influence and social status they once enjoyed, and profited from, was greatly diminished.



The trials these rich believers were passing through caused them to be brought down to reality and to realize that earthly riches are transitory. James uses an illustration from creation to drive home his point. He wanted them to understand that the rich man and his riches are like the spring wild flower of the field; as quickly as it appears it perishes when it is scorched by the summer heat. One of the lessons we can glean here is this: if the wealthy man, who is spiritually minded, were to lose his fortune overnight, he is to accept that it was only his for a short time anyway. His relationship with Christ should be far more important to him because it is of infinite worth! In addition, the treasure that he lays up in heaven is eternal and cannot be lost (Matt. 6:19-21).

The gospel has a way of leveling the field, which is illustrated time and again in the Scriptures.

For example, Peter extended his hand to the poor lame beggar at the temple “*and lifted him up*” (Acts 3:1-8). On the other hand, the Lord said to the rich publican named Zacchaeus, who had climbed up into the sycamore tree, “make haste, and *come down*; for today I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:1-5). James tells us that the brother of low degree is “exalted” while the rich brother is “made low.” The gospel is the great *equalizer!*

GOOD AND EVIL

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:12,13).

As we noted in an earlier lesson, the word “temptation” (Gr. *peirasmos*) that James uses here speaks of “a putting to *proof*, by experiment of good, or experience of evil, solicitation.” Our English word *temptation* is almost exclusively used today as a prompting to do evil. The biblical term, however, can also mean a “trial” sent by God which serves to test a believer’s faith (See Gen. 22:1 cf. Heb. 11:17). This twofold meaning is clearly exhibited in the above passages.

The purpose of God’s testing of Joseph: While Joseph’s brethren were contemplating what to do with him after they threw him into the pit, the Midianite merchantmen hoisted Joseph out of

his would-be grave and *sold* him to the Ishmaelites who were traveling to Egypt (Gen. 37:28). Interestingly, however, it is Joseph’s brethren who are charged with selling him into slavery—God ultimately held them *accountable* for placing their brother in harms way (Acts 7:9).

In Egypt Joseph endured slavery, betrayal, and treachery as his faith was sorely tested. Through all of his adversities, he remained faithful to the Lord. After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream he was given oversight over the land of Egypt. Only Pharaoh himself held a higher position.

“We should bear in mind that being exposed to temptation is not a sin.”

Years later when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn, because the famine was so severe in the land, Joseph’s identity was made known to his brethren, at which time they feared for their lives. Although Joseph was in a perfect position to retaliate, his reply to them displays the caliber of his spirituality: “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20). The testings of God are always meant to bring out the *good*.

Joseph’s temptation to do evil: The other side of the term

peirasmos or temptation is a solicitation to do *evil*. The purpose of the Tempter is to appeal to the base nature of the believer and cause him to stumble in the faith. Temptation is the Devil's insidious tool to draw his prey into a sinful situation. It has been correctly observed that temptation is normally not a one time event, but a *process*.

The afternoon that Potiphar's wife caught Joseph by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" was the end of a long process. Prior to that day he was gradually being lured toward the trap. It was ever so subtle at first but became more and more obvious in time. There was the seductive look when his master's wife, "cast her eyes upon Joseph." Then there were the "chance meetings" she arranged to flatter Joseph with sweet words of enticement, "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day." The web is spun wider with, she's so lonely, laced with the seemingly innocent request to "come lie *by* her," to keep her company. A short time later, with the house empty and the servants gone for the day, the final allure-ment: we're all alone, no one will ever know, "And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me" (Gen. 39:6-12).

Thankfully, Joseph did all the right things in the face of a temptation that could have destroyed him, if he had yielded to it. The Scriptures state concerning Potiphar's wife's first advance that Joseph "refused her." When she pursued the matter he revealed to her the depravity of her request:

"how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Notice that the act of adultery would not only have been a sin against his master, but God Himself. On another occasion, "he hearkened not unto her." Finally, she caught him by his garment, but Joseph wisely fled out of the house leaving the garment in her hand. The key to overcoming temptation is resist, resist, and if necessary *flee!*

James, of course, knew his hearers were also susceptible to temptation, especially the temptation to *retaliate* against those who were oppressing them. But they, too, were to resist with the understanding: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

THE TAP ROOT OF EVIL

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man."

The origin of evil has been passionately debated by scholars and theologians since it first raised its ugly head. So it is doubtful that we are going to resolve the matter to everyone's satisfaction in these few lines. Some have even gone as far as to charge God with its inception. Mitton astutely observes: "God is untemptable! There is nothing in God to which evil can make its appeal. And it is impossible to think of One so wholly free from evil as being in any way directly responsible for it in another."³

"Thou art the anointed cherub [Lucifer] that covereth; and I

have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence” (Ezek. 28:14-16).

Based upon the above passages, most agree that shortly after the dawn of creation God tested His angelic host to ensure their loyalty to their Creator and His eternal purpose. We know the test was not between good and evil, simply because evil was nonexistent at this point in time. Apparently the test was between wills. As free moral agents, the angels could *choose* to follow their own will or God’s will. It is here that evil was *conceived* in the heart of Lucifer. As the Scriptures clearly say, **“till iniquity was found in thee....**Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezek. 28:15,17).

Satan wanted to be like God. He desired the honor and glory that was rightly due the Lord. In his rebellion against the Holy One of heaven he led one-third of the angelic host astray in his defection. The rebellion ended when God created the Lake of

Fire for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). One word sums it up—*pride!* So then, it is Satan and his fallen host who tempt man to do evil, not God. The devil is the one who is ascribed the title, Tempter! He is the one who appeared in the garden to tempt our first parents.

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14,15).

James was concerned for the brethren of his day that they didn’t take sin lightly. Sin has consequences! Incredibly, the formula of temptation hasn’t changed after all these centuries. It’s the promise of something that is forbidden. We should bear in mind that being exposed to temptation is not a sin. The Lord was exposed to it three times in the wilderness, yet we know “He knew no sin.” It is when you yield to the temptation that a sin is committed.

To Be Continued! 

Endnotes

1. *Illustrations Unlimited* by James S. Hewett, Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, page 40.
2. *The Epistle of James*, C. Leslie Mitton, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pages 36,37.
3. *Ibid.*, page 47.

Hurricane Katrina: We’ve just received the news about the disaster in the South. We here at *Berean Bible Society* would like to assure everyone in the afflicted areas that you are in our prayers. If anyone would like to help our Grace brethren who have been affected by this tragedy, please contact us at BBS. More next month.

The following is the seventh in a series of excerpts from Pastor Stam's classic work on *True Spirituality*. Since this book never appeared as a series in the *Searchlight*, many of even our long-time readers may not be familiar with these selections.

The Filling With the Spirit

THE BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVE

By Cornelius R. Stam

The majority of believers are very much confused with regard to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives and the exact extent to which they may expect His help in overcoming sin. This confusion has been brought about mainly by the unscriptural tradition that the present dispensation began with the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. A further word in this connection will therefore be necessary.

Those who hold that Pentecost marks the beginning of the present dispensation should examine carefully those Scriptures which deal with the Holy Spirit and His work. A simple comparison, for example, of His operation at Pentecost with His operation today, as outlined in the Pauline epistles, can lead to but one conclusion: that the baptism with, or in, the Spirit at Pentecost has been superseded by another baptism altogether—that by which believers are baptized into one body—and that the Body of Christ did not exist (except in the mind of God) when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. If our Fundamentalists will verify and accept this fact, they will have

the answer to the "Pentecostal" fanaticism that is sweeping the country today.

THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION AT PENTECOST

Concerning the one hundred twenty believers gathered in the upper room at Pentecost, we read:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4, R.V.).

This, of course, is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit took complete possession of them.¹ Those who have come to appreciate the meaning of the Bible word *baptism*, will see at once the connection with the Lord's promise that His own should be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Indeed, they were "*filled*" with the Spirit (Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of the promise that they should be "*baptized*" with the Spirit.

And the result of this baptism, this filling, with the Spirit, was not only that they possessed miraculous powers, but also that they lived the kind of lives which God's people prior to that time had failed to live, and this is the particular matter with which we are here concerned.

Mark well: in Acts 2:4 we do not have an *exhortation* to be filled with the Spirit, as we have later in the Pauline epistles. Rather, we have a simple statement of fact: “*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*”

The one hundred twenty had, of course, been much like any other group of believers in history. They had not all been equally spiritual or devoted or faithful. Some had been more so than others, and where some had excelled in one virtue, others had excelled in another. Yet now they were *all FILLED* with the Spirit, from the least to the greatest of them.

The thoughtful student of Scripture will, of course, ask why all these believers were now filled with the Holy Spirit. Was it, perhaps, because they, as a group, had been more godly than those before them? The gospel records prove that this is not so. Peter boasted, Thomas doubted, James and John sought personal gain, and when our Lord was taken prisoner, “they all forsook Him and fled.” Was it then because they had *prayed* long enough or earnestly enough for the Spirit to come upon them and take control? No; they had been instructed to go to Jerusalem, not to *pray* for the Holy Spirit to come, as some suppose, but to “*wait* for the [fulfillment of the] *promise*” regarding the Spirit (Acts 1:4,5)—and right here is the answer to our question. The believers at Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit, not because they had prayed long or earnestly enough for the Spirit to come, but because *the time had arrived for*

the fulfillment² of the divine promise. The Old Testament prophets and the Lord Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit should some day come to take control of God’s people, and *that day had come.* They were *filled* with the Spirit because God, according to His promise, had *baptized* them with the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT’S OPERATION TODAY

The Apostle Paul never anywhere says that all the members of the Body of Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is surely clear from the record that the Corinthians and the Galatians, for example, were not filled with the Spirit, for Paul’s letters to these churches contain much of rebuke and correction. And it is also evident that believers today are not—even the best of them—wholly filled with the Spirit. The filling with the Spirit is now a goal, an attainment, which the apostle, by inspiration, sets before us. We are not all filled with the Spirit as a matter of fact, as were the Pentecostal believers. While the Spirit does indeed dwell within us by God’s grace, we must *daily* appropriate His help and blessing *by faith.*

Hence the apostle now *exhorts* believers: “*Be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18) just as he exhorts them and prays for them, that they may be “*filled with the fruits of righteousness*” (Phil. 1:11); “*filled with the knowledge of His will*” (Col. 1:9); “*filled with all the fulness of God*” (Eph. 3:19).

But *why* are not *we* automatically filled with the Spirit as the

believers were at Pentecost? We will proceed to answer this question, but let the reader not fail to first recognize the *fact* that while the believers gathered in the upper room at Pentecost were *all filled* with the Spirit, the believers under Paul, since that time, have *not* all been filled with the Spirit. Moreover, while it is distinctly stated, again and again, that the Pentecostal believers were, or were to be, *baptized* with the Spirit, not once does Paul in his epistles teach that members of the Body of Christ are baptized with the Spirit.³ Instead he *exhorts* them to appropriate God's grace by faith so that they may be filled with the Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

The prophesied work of the Holy Spirit in connection with His people Israel should be clearly understood if we would understand His work today, in connection with the members of the Body of Christ. In Joel 2:28,29 God promised to supernaturally cause them to prophesy, etc., but in Ezekiel 36:26,27, He also promised to supernaturally *cause* them to do His will:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

"And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Thus God would show that the only way in which even His own

people can perfectly obey Him is when He takes *possession* of them and *causes* them to do His will. Indeed He is still demonstrating this. Though we today have all the advantages and blessings of the dispensation of Grace, and though we desire most earnestly to obey and serve God as we ought, we still continually fall short. This is because, contrary to popular opinion, *none* of us has been baptized with the Spirit.

THE CONDUCT OF THE BELIEVERS AT PENTECOST

At Pentecost the time had come, so far as prophecy was concerned, for the fulfillment of the promise concerning the Holy Spirit. *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:1,4).

We must be careful to notice the immediate change that took place in the behavior of these believers, now that the Holy Spirit had come to take possession of them. Not only did they speak with tongues and prophesy and work miracles, but *they all began living for one another*.

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44,45).

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

“Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

“And laid them down at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32,34,35).

Never before had the disciples of Christ even approached such a spirit of utter selflessness and love for one another. In spite of the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and our Lord’s repeated exhortations to sell and distribute their earthly goods and live for one another, they—even the twelve—had heretofore been fully as human and selfish as those who had gone before them.

One day James and John came to ask a special favor of Christ: that *they* might occupy the first places in the kingdom, sitting, the one at Christ’s right hand and the other at His left! (Mark 10:37). Modest fellows! And the other ten were really no different at heart, for we read: *“When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John”* (Ver. 41). We can almost hear them exclaim to each other: “Who do James and John think they are!” Nor was this the first time the apostles had *“disputed among themselves who should be the greatest”* (Mark 9:34).

But now, suddenly, all this was changed! Now each one put self aside and placed others first. And, as Jeremiah had predicted, *this came from the heart*. Mark well,

it was of a multitude numbering more than five thousand (Acts 4:4) that we read that they were all of one heart and of one soul, and sold their lands and houses and brought the proceeds to the apostles for distribution among the needy. Imagine the freedom and joy and blessedness that must have prevailed among the disciples under these conditions! These were indeed “the days of heaven upon earth”!

God’s children in this present dispensation—the so-called Pentecostalists included—have never lived together as the believers at Pentecost did. Imagine even suggesting having all things common among believers today! Those who cry *“Back to Pentecost”* would not, we fear, be the first to step up and hand over their hard-earned investments as Barnabas and *all* the believing property owners did at Pentecost. Indeed, it would be *wrong* if we did this today, for the Spirit’s instruction for this present evil age is:

“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (I Tim. 5:8).

To Be Continued! 

Endnotes

1. Much as whatever takes possession of the mind is said to fill it.
2. Some look upon Pentecost merely as a foreshadowing of the promised Millennium blessing. We believe it was the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise, but that the complete fulfillment was interrupted by the dispensation of Grace. Note: “This is that...” (Acts 2:16).
3. Not even in I Corinthians 12:13.

A Sound Mind, Cont'd

BIBLICAL TRANSFORMATION

By Stephen Shober
BBS Board Member



How Morphing Works

Believers should embrace and clearly understand transformation.

- It is not an instantaneous act of God, it is a **process of God** (lifelong).
- It is not a gift (it is not acquired all at one time or in a complete form like a gift); it is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit requiring cooperation and effort on our part. In this regard, it helps to understand that generally a spiritual gift and an act of God go together (example: salvation), whereas, spiritual fruit and a process of God go together (examples: love, joy, peace).
- The passive voice (Greek) in Romans 12:2 means the Holy Spirit will do the transforming for us as we cooperate with Him (listening, yielding, relying, submitting, learning, praying, studying, obeying...).
- We do not get a renewed mind by just praying, asking or believing. There are no shortcuts or quick and easy ways for becoming spiritually mature.
- It results in His fruit growing in us (Galatians 5:22-23, Philipians 1:11, Ephesians 5:9).
- Fruit grows slowly, requiring: nurturing (Word, prayer, obedience...), cultivation (weed removal, i.e., those old things in our life that choke out our new life in Christ), watering (worship and praise), fertile ground (a mind receptive and hungry), pruning (some strategic removal of “self” so that we can be closer to the Vine and produce better fruit), and pest removal (Ephesians 6, spiritual warfare).

The schematics below will be used to help illustrate this important ministry. Concerning the soul and spirit, Hebrews 4:12 indicates that

only the Word of God can discern the difference between them because they are so much alike in their nature and activities. Likewise, the activities of soul, mind and heart are similar, overlapping considerably.

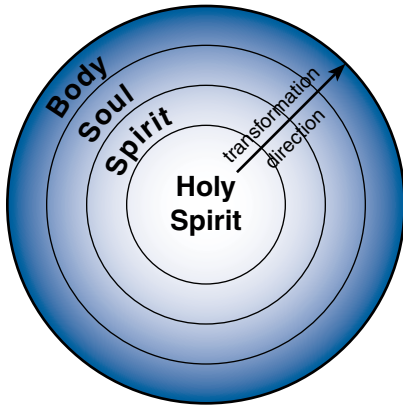


Figure 1—Schematic of our makeup

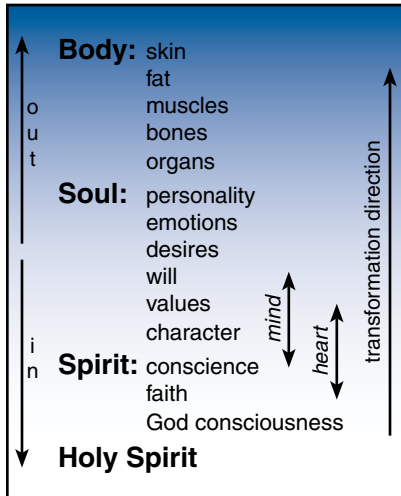


Figure 2—More detailed view of our makeup

In Figure 1, the four circles represent our entire being. On the outside is our temporary house (our body), next deeper down into our being is our soul (mind/heart), and further into the deeper parts of our being (our core) is our spirit. The most inner circle would be a black hole (void of God) for the unsaved, but for the believer the Holy Spirit comes within and fills this most important part of our being. In time past (including the Gospels), the Spirit worked from the outside to create changes within the person. But now, in this dispensation, the Holy Spirit is within the person and works outward—a much more effective means for assuring a Godly demeanor. He works from the deepest recesses of our being, working outward, transforming our mind and life in the process.

As the Holy Spirit works, He is primarily interested in the most important areas of our existence, i.e., our spirit and the deeper parts of our soul. What is contained in these areas where the Spirit primarily works? Well, the core issues of life. Starting at the deepest issues and going toward the less deep, the order is somewhat like this: God-consciousness, faith,

conscience, character, value system, will, desires, and so forth. Figure 2 represents a more detailed view of various parts of our composition (from the body to the Holy Spirit) and how they relate. Things like personality and emotions are far from the core; it is not as likely He will change our body, personality or emotions as it is He will change the core issues. He changes our core issues and creates fruit in our life; thus, a person will have inner joy (character issue) but may not display a happy face

(emotion). Other examples of His transforming power are seen when a person's value system is changed from pro-choice to pro-life or when a person's desires are changed over time such that addictive behavior is overcome. Godly convictions, conscience and behavior are created through a renewed mind.

The Spirit is needed in transforming us because we are incapable to affect any change on our own. As an example, consider our character, which comes from the depths and recesses of our being. Our character is different than our personality, our personality is our outward manifestation to the world around us. Our character looks inward, it feels our hurt and joy, it arranges our inner value system and motivations. Character is the foundation upon which our personality acts. Our character has some very basic needs, and these needs are generally established early in life and are based upon our first and most primitive experiences. The word for character originally meant, "to carve, engrave, scratch, or cut grooves."¹¹ It comprises the deepest imprints (grooves) in our person, and these grooves are not easily changed. For most people these early-formed imprints are permanently engraved into their being. Those grooves that are in error are the 'scars of life' that cause many people mental health problems their whole life. We need Divine help to remove them (when they are contrary to God's will). It is like erasing scratches in a phonographic record or CD, impossible for us, easy for Him. If done through self-effort we only "pick scabs" and create permanent scars. We must depend upon Him to make us new from the inside-out to remove the grooves and erase the scars of the past; otherwise, they will control us and hold us captive our entire life.

Prepare for the Journey

The life-long journey of transformation is not necessarily easy and it has frustrations. It is the journey He has planned and will guide; it goes places we did not know existed. None of us could have even dreamed of such a journey.

A. Accept thorns: Recall the boy and chrysalis story; struggle is one means for growth if we want to mature. God uses struggles and trials to mature us; we must bear His cross. Accept the fact there will be many discouragements and even doubts, but do not let them deter you from further growth.

B. Expect Spiritual Advancement: Philippians 3:15-16—Let your level of spiritual attainment be your guide for further advancement, but do not get stuck at some level and think you can not mature more. Your imperfections will be revealed by the Holy Spirit so that you may continue to grow and be more complete (not sinless, but a well rounded Christian). Maturity versus infancy is the issue; God wants to continually transform us so we more and more conform to Christ.

C. Rejoice in the Refiner's touch: God loves you just the way you are, but refuses to leave you that way; He wants you to be like Christ. We love babies just as they are, but do we stop when they fill their pants? No, that is their nature; we want to help them grow and refuse to leave them that way (II Corinthians 3:18). We do not want to be spiritual babies for long.

D. New light/truth demands change: Transformation enables us to mentally accept the concept that a "reasonable service" for our Lord is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, Romans 12:1. If you have to give up former ways, habits or addictions, He will first change your desires and then give you the willpower to do it—change becomes easier than originally thought. As we commit to a new way of life it will, over time, become a natural way of life. Change/sacrifice is what God asks, and is a ministry of the Holy Spirit we should take great care not to quench.

E. Stretch Forward: In Philippians 3:1-14 Paul uses a race runner's analogy. The runner's speed is slackened by looking backward to those behind, so the Christian's onward progress is hindered by dwelling on the past. The past, whether bad or good, can hold us captive and prevent future advancement. Forgetting the past means to not let it dominate our present emotions and life. If things have been made right with those involved, we should forget about the past and stretch forward to the things ahead, like a runner leans toward the finish line. You cannot run the race looking backward.

Outcome of Transformation

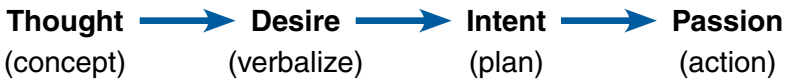
Transformation results in a closer walk and intimacy with Christ. Intimacy allows us to be ourselves without fear of disapproval. Thus, I can pour my heart out to Him without fear of His disappointment and He can pour Himself into me without my resistance or fear. A transformed mind thinks something like this:

As the Lord leads, I desire to live with a personal, intimate relationship with the Lord—a life infused with a God-given purpose. May my intent be to know Him so closely that everything I think or touch is filled with the fullness of Christ. Furthermore, may my passion be to have a mind with the inclination and desires to believe and pursue Christ-likeness with every aspect of my being.

Transformation creates true empowerment. Power is produced from within, actuating and providing us with the ability to perform what He desires in our lives. As His fruit begins growing in our mind, our lives displays more and more Christ-likeness, and our lives reflects the fruit of growing in grace. We are empowered to glorify God.

Practical help

There is a fairly well known process for getting from the thought of doing something to actually getting it done. First we have the thought of accomplishing something, this is the conceptual stage that involves our will; it takes place in our mind. The next step is to move the thought from our mind to verbalizing it (saying it), this expresses our desire to others and tends to establish it in our heart. Once we have verbalized our desire then we move to establishing our intent (the planning stage): answering the what, how, and when questions that help assure accomplishment of the goal. Then, the final stage is to have a passion about doing (action) what is needed to see the goal become an accomplished fact.



Note how similar this is to what God did for us so that we could be “in Christ” in this present age. First, by His will he developed the concept in His mind (thought it all out before the foundation of the world), verbalized it (let Us make man in our Own image), planned for the whole process of Christ’s death and the life hereafter (He even planned to keep some things secret for a time), and finally He put it all into action and directed the process.

Each step of maturity brought about by transformation of the mind helps assure the next steps of spiritual growth are godly in origin. The renewed mind can then correctly express the desire, plan for change and passionately pursue the goal. But, all too often we quench the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19) by finding excuses for not allowing the Holy Spirit to work fully in our life, e.g., “All men lust,” “A bad temper runs in the family,” “I just cannot love my spouse.” How sad, how inexcusable! He commands us not to have this mind-set and has created a way that He can accomplish needed change from the very core of our being. The Lord’s heart must ache for the person who has been a Christian for years and has preferred to retain the mind of the old nature. This compromised holiness is the precursor to a compromised life, with less impact and service than desired.

In addition to quenching the Holy Spirit there is another way we hinder transformation. It has to do with how we view things in general, and how we view something can subconsciously drive our intent and passion. It has been shown that we have best results when we view a situation from the positive, rather than from the negative. If viewed from the negative, there is often a break in the process between *Desire* and *Intent*. God puts the thought in the mind, the person translates that into a desire, but Satan (or self) finds a way for partial obedience to seem very godly, and this prevents further advancement. The example below will help clarify this.

A person says, “I hate being so angry.” This is viewing an area of concern from the negative perspective. The problem with this view is that the expressed desire is to hate anger, so in order for this person to hate being angry they must be angry. The intent (plan) follows the desire, so the plan in this case will revolve around how to hate being angry. Unfortunately, in order to continue to hate one’s anger a person must stay angry. It seems absurd at first, but such views inadvertently and subconsciously set a person up for failure; in this case, the person tends to get hung-up on hating anger rather than getting over it. They can find solace in the fact they hate what God hates, but they end up being just partially obedient and do not appropriate God’s provision for victory. A person has to view and state their desire positively, “With God’s help, I will be slow to anger.” Once we have thought it out and verbalized being slow to anger, then plans to accomplish this can begin and the person can passionately practice being slow to anger.

The person above must make cooperation with the Lord a moment-by-moment issue. Cooperation requires searching for Scriptures that apply to the situation, confronting the situation constructively, making no provisions to continue to sin, repenting (immediately stopping wrong behavior and acknowledging the sin), and practicing replacing anger with the things noted in Philippians 4:8. A specific formula/approach for success in overcoming each problem area of life cannot be given because it is the work of the Holy Spirit and may be different in each person’s life. What works for one may not work for another, this is His domain. Again, there are no short cuts and each person must search the Scriptures daily for help and insights, while also searching for strongholds in their life that have to be brought into obedience to the Lord.

How should one verbalize a temper problem: “I wish I did not have a bad temper” or “I will be longsuffering”? How about relationships: “My spouse and I have irreconcilable differences” or “Christ can make something beautiful out of the ashes of our marriage and I will make that my top priority.” Consider this approach for any issue, say, being overweight.


There is instruction in the oxymoron, “Lord give me patience and give it to me now.” Prayer alone will not yield patience. Prayer coupled with a willing mind and obedience to His Word will. The very instance we feel impatience occurring we must cut it off, “make no provision for the flesh,” and replace it with proper behavior. This may require some personal suffering; but recall Romans 5:3 indicates tribulation (suffering) leads to patience, which leads to experience (character building) and that to hope. So, when we seek patience we are likely to experience suffering and gain experience in the process. Transformation is the process of embarking on a journey with the Holy Spirit, trekking into unexplored secret avenues of our lives, going down paths we never knew

existed, and accomplishing the impossible. We learn it is a journey based upon obedience, trust and reliance upon Him.

Closing

The first step in God's plan to make us whole is our salvation. Salvation provides the very deepest spiritual needs a person has; these are the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1:4-2:6. Although we get these blessings the moment of salvation, it takes the life-long work of the Holy Spirit to help us understand and appreciate them. These blessings help erase insecurity and feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness by replacing them with the comfort and assurance of Christ.

The next step in making us whole (sound-minded) is our transformation. A leopard cannot change its spots; on the contrary, a Christian must. We have access to Divine empowerment to change the spots (core issues) of our life. To say, "I cannot help who I am," is not true. Christians have the Holy Spirit within them, so the issue is not who you are, but who He is. He determines who you can be. In all stages of our life, no matter what our age, the Lord has work to do; the issue is, are we willing to yield and cooperate. It has been said there are two sides to every person, one minute sweet and lovely to one person and a minute later explosive in rage to another; this does not have to be the case for the believer.

Transformation is accomplished through mind renewal, and as He renews our minds the fruit of the Holy Spirit is produced in our life—slowly but surely replacing the attitudes and character traits belonging to the old nature. Then, when we are squeezed by life's trials we display the love, joy, peace, and longsuffering indicative of Christ in us. A popular hymn refers to us as worms before our salvation; we may have been worms at that time, but His ministry is changing us worms into beautiful creatures of great worth. 

Endnote

11. Malone, Thomas & Patrick; *The Art of Intimacy*, Simon & Schuster, 1987.



Steve Shober is a Naturopath (natural health practitioner) and a member of the BBS Board of Directors. If you would like to hear more about this subject, Steve will be speaking on Transformation at our *Family Dynamics and Personal Growth* conference in November (see Page 29). If you have questions about this article in the meantime, you can contact him at: Biblical Health Ministries, 7179 Clover Hill Dr., Waunakee, WI 53597; or shober@chorus.net. Biblical Health Ministries is a non-profit ministry dedicated to teaching God's provisions for our health.

Question Box

“Is John 16:13 a promise for today?”

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

The Apostle Paul describes the present “dispensation” in which we live as a *“mystery”* (Col. 1:25,26) “which in other ages was *not made known*” (Eph. 3:5) until it was *“made known”* to Paul (Eph. 3:3). Hence in John 16:13, the Lord cannot be predicting the activity of the Spirit during the present age, for He lived during one of the “other ages” in which the present age was “not made known.” Were He speaking of the Spirit’s activity today, He would have been making known an aspect of the mystery that Paul says was not made known until it was revealed to him.

Rather when John 16:13 speaks of when the Spirit “is come,” it is speaking of the coming of the Spirit *at Pentecost*. When the Lord foretold that the Spirit “will guide you into all truth,” we are reminded of the Lord’s earlier description of the Spirit’s ministry when He said, “He shall teach you all things” (John 14:26). However here the Lord goes on to say that the Spirit will “bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Thus the “all things” of John 14:26 and the “all truth” of John 16:13 are limited by our Lord to expansions of things *previously revealed*, and not the new truths of the mystery program.

We see the fulfillment of John 16:13’s prophecy in I John 2:20,27:

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth....”

These words, written to the Pentecostal believers, indicate that the Spirit had indeed come and had been their guide into all truth, and had indeed taught them all things. But the “all things” of which it speaks are limited to amplifications of “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3) of which the Lord had already spoken (John 14:26). This is similar to how the parables the Lord taught while on earth were merely enlargements of Old Testament prophetic truth, and were not introductions of mystery truths that remained secret until the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

—Pastor Kurth



Spotlight on Grace Churches

This month's church is:

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Pastor: Timothy R. Board

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Contact information: Church mailing address: 4845 S. Perry Park
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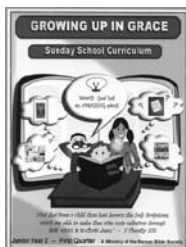
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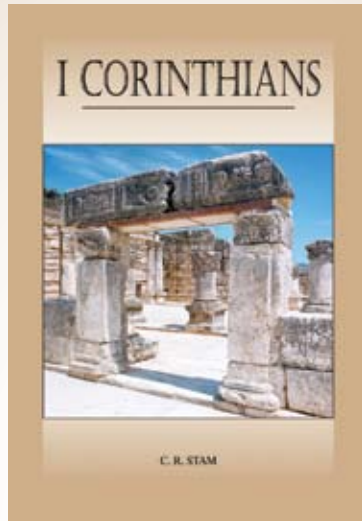
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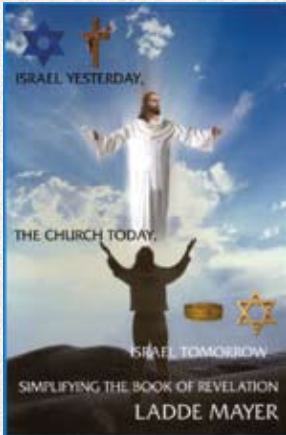
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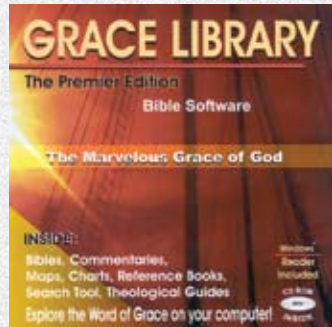
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From Illinois:

"I cannot express how blessed I have been through the literature ministry of *Berean Bible Society*. Thanks for all, and I pray for your ministry daily."

From Missouri:

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From Michigan:

"All glory to God for your great studies in the Epistle of James and to be enlightened on the importance of the Lord's half brother...I'm so excited that I'm forever learning. Thanks for the *Berean Searchlight*."

From the Internet:

"I am a long-time dispensationalist, in the old Dallas position. Through God's grace I changed to a mid-Acts position about a year ago. I am a farmer that works with pastors providing them with encouragement and information. God is already changing many of these believers minds about the mid-Acts position." (This farmer is planting *spiritual* seeds as well! See I Cor. 3:6—RK).

From Wisconsin:

"In home-schooling my 10th grade son, I supplemented a curriculum New Testament survey with your pieces in the *Berean Searchlight*. He was able to understand your writings pretty well. Thank you for making your writing understandable for people of all ages."

From the Philippines:

"I know a lot of people who have been blessed by your magazine, and I hope that you will continue teaching young people like me in rightly dividing the Word of God."

From Arizona:

"Over the years we have purchased your books—guess what? We gave them all away because we wanted people to know the truth of the gospel of grace. The June *Searchlight* contained an article that was premium in quality and really stirred my mind, spirit and soul. It was 'Developing Convictions About Truth.' What an impact this article could be in some of our present day churches!"

From Norway:

"Here in Norway we are still fighting the good struggle for the Grace Movement. I try to divide God's Word in the right way. We have great opposition from both the Lutheran and Reformed churches, but we go on."

From Texas:

"Years ago I suddenly began to receive the *Searchlight*. I have no idea who sent my name to you. I was a Presbyterian and as you know, they frown on dispensationalism and are strong on the covenants. Despite attending their church, I had always studied the Bible from a dispensational viewpoint. So when I started reading the *Searchlight*, I thought, 'These people are speaking my language!' What a delight! I should explain that my grandfather, I. R. Dean, was an evangelist and a dispensationalist, so I was early pointed in the right direction. He and William R. Newell were great friends. They literally preached their way around the world, starting in opposite directions and meeting in China."

From Arizona:

"The *Searchlight* has danced me into a great grace understanding. This evil age can try to conform me, but your books reform me and my understanding." (We encourage this kind of dancing!—RK).

From Oregon:

“Congratulations on a job very well done. ‘The Key to Understanding the Scriptures’ has turned out so well. I would like to request 25 copies to use as a tool to help others better understand God’s program for today.”

From Nigeria:

“I desire to know more about Christ and your resources truly contribute to the uplifting of my spirit. Some practical questions have been addressed using your website. Thanks for being there for me.”

From Indonesia:

“Pray for our current ministry in Indonesia. We have now 60 Grace congregations among 230 million of Indonesia population.” (Please pray for Pastor Ruddy Akay, head of *Things to Come Mission* in the world’s largest Muslim country.—RK).

From California:

“I devour the *Searchlight* immediately upon arrival, then try to share it with other residents of my retirement facility. I place copies on tables in the lobby or hallways and notice that they are picked up immediately, and have received some glowing comments.”

From New Zealand:

“Thank you for the *Two Minutes* Bible study you send me every day. I have been blessed by all the articles. I thank God that He opened my eyes to understand I’m saved not by my works but by believing in Him. In my past, I used to work hard at church and hoped I could be saved by doing all these works. I thank God for this wonderful message.”

From the Philippines:

“The *Searchlight* enhances my spiritual knowledge as I grow in grace. I’d like to thank you, though late now, since you came to the Philippines in May and your company dropped by Tablon, Cagayan de oro....I am so thankful that I and my husband receive this blissful magazine. All our questions are really answered through the *Searchlight*. I also use it in sharing to the young people.”

From Illinois:

“What a wonderful [BBF] conference! The forgiveness series was very good—probably because I saw myself in so many things being said. All of the speakers were good. I’m so happy to be able to help support BBI. They are doing a wonderful job—such fine young people they are graduating.”

From Wisconsin:

“Thank you for your e-mail I am studying it and will restudy it. My church is pushing baptism and I need answers to these questions.”

From California:

“I’m not disappointed if you check and find that there are no other Grace believers here in my area. That would mean that the harvest here is very green and as the Lord has led me to start this study group, I can expect great blessings from Him as I commit myself for His ministry.” (Write us for more information about this new Bible study in Oceanside, CA.—RK).

From Tennessee:

“Thank you for your very important ministry. We look forward to all the articles in the *Searchlight* each month. Please use this small gift in whatever way it is needed.”

“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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Pastor John Fredericksen (605) 341-9692



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Buckeye State Meetings

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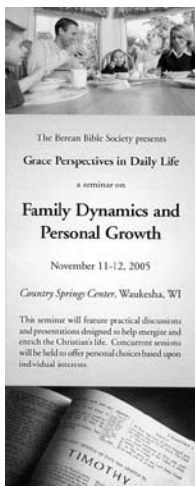
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Jeff Seekins, Pastor of *Community Bible Church*
Steve Shoher, Naturopath and *BBS Board Member*

Please call the *Country Springs Hotel* at (262) 547-0201 to make your own room reservations and mention the code: "BIBKN" to get the special conference rate. Please try to make your reservations 30 days or more in advance.

For additional information or to receive a brochure and registration form, please contact: Pastor Ricky Kurth or Mr. Doug Cox at: (262) 255-4750. Or write: *Berean Bible Society*, PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022, e-mail: berean@execpc.com.

Written and video taped proceedings of the conference will be made available.

Please make seminar checks payable to "Berean Bible Society"

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hot off the press! Pastor Stam's commentary on *I Corinthians* has just been reprinted, and is now sporting some valuable new features. A Scripture Index prepared by Jessica Sadler now appears at the end of this important volume, and study questions prepared by our good friend Jim Warren can be found there as well. For more information, and a preview of the attractive new dust jacket, see Page 24.

Heading for the press: *Now That I Believe*, our booklet for new Grace believers, has recently been translated into Portuguese by our friend Pastor Carlos Oliveira of Portugal. Brazilian missionary translators Leo and Con Keiper are in the process of preparing the booklet for publication. However, due to the 30% rise in the cost of living in Brazil, this work cannot go forward without financial help. Hence if you would like to see this useful booklet made available to the world's 200 million Portuguese-speaking people, we urge you to contact Leo at info@wordofgracemission.org, or at *Word of Grace Mission*, PO Box 1160, Collinsville, IL 62234.

Florida Bible Study: Those who live in the area around Brooksville and Newport Richey (about 65 miles north of St. Petersburg) are invited to attend a Bible study that meets every other week in the Spring Hill home of Lee and Stella Wasson. Since Pastor Floyd Baker drives in from Orange City to teach this class, he stays the night and thus enables the group to meet with him on both Monday and Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. For more information, please contact Lee Wasson at 352-688-4427.

A blessed event! Andre and Kim Fountain welcomed their firstborn child on August 6th. The doctors called Brandon DeShaun a miracle baby when he was born in perfect health despite some umbilical cord knotting, a potentially dangerous condition. Consequently Kim and Andre have much for which to be thankful in their home in Country Club Hills, Illinois.

Our cover this month features a photo taken by Ken and Barb Wardius, a couple who travel extensively throughout the state of Wisconsin in search of unique photo opportunities. You can view some of their impressive gallery of photographs on various themes and you can e-mail them with any questions at their website: www.crestwoodcreek.com.

*Our cover lighthouse photo was taken by Ken and Barb Wardius. The *Sturgeon Bay Canal North Pierhead Light* is located in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. This combination lighthouse and fog signal building marks the east entrance to the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal, which provides a protected shortcut from Lake Michigan to Green Bay.

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