

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2008



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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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Editor: Paul M. Sadler; Assistant Editor: Ricky L. Kurth

Composition and Layout: Kevin J. Sadler

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Questions, comments, orders? You can reach us at:

Berean Bible Society
 N112 W17761 Mequon Road
 PO Box 756
 Germantown, WI 53022

Main Office: (262) 255-4750
 Fax Number: (262) 255-4195

Internet: www.bereanbiblesociety.org
 E-mail: berean@execpc.com

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., CST

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

A little over 20 years ago Pastor Stam and the Board of Directors at the time turned over the editorship of the *Berean Searchlight* to me so that Brother Stam could devote more time to writing commentaries. This enabled him to produce a number of additional works that otherwise would not have been possible before his health began to fail.

When Pastor Stam handed over the reins of the editorship, he said to me, in that deep booming voice of his, “Brother Paul, always keep the *Searchlight* vital.” I have done my level best to live up to this challenge. By the grace of God, we have never wavered in our stand for the truth of Paul’s apostleship and message over the years. Furthermore we have sought to address timely subjects that we believed would be spiritually beneficial to our readers, as this issue demonstrates.

At our last board meeting, we turned over the editorship of the *Berean Searchlight* to Pastor Ricky Kurth, who is more than capable of handling the task. This will give me more time to produce DVD’s on Paul’s gospel, work on commentaries, and set up regional BBS Conferences around the country to proclaim the riches of His grace. I will still be writing articles for the *Searchlight* and occasionally you will be hearing from me in a new section called: *From the President’s Desk!*



Pastor Kurth has been working with me on the inner-workings of the *Searchlight* for a number of years, so he is already up to speed as far as its composition. Those of you who have heard Ricky speak or if you’ve read his writings are well aware that he is a *straight arrow* when it comes to the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery. I know that Brother Kurth will greatly appreciate your support and daily prayers on his behalf, as he assumes this new responsibility. Next month you will be hearing from our new Editor!

Of course, I’m one of those take charge type of guys who’s quick to resolve issues, so the Board requested that when the staff comes to me with a question or a problem with the *Searchlight* that my response should be: “See the Editor!” They did want me to know however, that the “buck” ultimately still stops at my desk as the president of the *Berean Bible Society*. So you can be sure if there is good news or a problem, I will be kept informed!

Yours in His service,
Paul M. Sadler, President



Letter Excerpt *Extra*

From the Internet:

"I have been studying the Berean concept of how to study the Word of God. I have been doing this for about five years, and in that time I have become fully persuaded that this is how God would have me to study His Word, rightly divided. In doing so, this has caused many difficulties in my life. I have no one to turn to who I believe would understand. As you know, there are very few people who will fully receive that we are living under total grace without works or rituals.

"I have gone from being a comfortable Christian bookstore owner, who spent all his free time doing mission work in the poorest areas of Central America, to selling the bookstore, mainly because there was so much *stuff* being taught that I was selling that had little or nothing to do with rightly dividing the Word of truth.

"I attend a charismatic assembly in my town, and I don't think I have to explain what I am going through there. My mission team I work with in Central America is all Pentecostal, holiness or Assembly of God background, so you can see the dilemma there. They are my Christian family. I know I could walk away from my church and responsibilities. Where would I go? I know I could walk away from my responsibilities in Central America. How would my heavenly Father see this?

"It seems as God has always treated me as a totally mature Christian, and I don't think I am. This walking by total faith is such a hard thing for me. I hope you understand. I have no answers and no one other than the Lord and His Word to turn to, and it is hard for me.

"I have been trying to talk to one of my pastors in El Savador about rightly dividing God's Word. He has asked me to set some time aside to talk to him next month when I go down. Please help me to lay out the best conversation I can have with him about rightly dividing the Word of God in less than two hours, remembering that he is Pentecostal.

"I know I am saying a lot, but I need help if you can. Looking forward to your response."

We trust that all our Searchlight readers will remember this dear brother in prayer.

The Mysteries of the Kingdom (Part 5)

By Paul M. Sadler



“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.”

—Matt. 13:47,48

WARNING NEGLECTED

The well known and beloved evangelist, D. L. Moody told the following story to his congregation of an experience he had during a visit to England:

“I was in the north of England, 1881, when a fearful storm swept over that part of the country. A friend of mine, who was a minister at Eyemouth, had a great many of the fishermen of the place in his congregation. It had been very stormy weather, and the fishermen had been detained in the harbor for a week. One day, however, the sun shone out in

a clear blue sky; it seemed as if the storm had passed away, and the boats started out for the fishing ground. Forty-one boats left the harbor that day. Before they started, the harbor-master hoisted the storm signal and warned them of the coming tempest. He begged of them not to go, but they disregarded his warning, and away they went. They saw no sign of the coming storm. In a few hours, however, it swept down on that coast, and very few of those fishermen returned. There were five or six men in each boat, and nearly all were lost in that dreadful gale. In the church of which my friend was pastor, I believe there were three male members left.

“Those men were ushered into eternity because they did not give heed to the warning. I lift up the storm signal now, and warn you to escape from the coming judgment.”

A LESSON FROM THE SEA

The Lord's special revelation of the seven mysteries of the kingdom of heaven concluded with the narrative now under consideration, which is called the "Parable of the Dragnet." While there are many other parables that would follow during the earthly ministry of Christ, this particular story drew to a conclusion this line of teaching. In the final parable, the Lord likens the kingdom of heaven to a *net* that was cast into the sea. Of course, the disciples had firsthand knowledge of this, seeing that many of them were fisherman by trade (Matt. 4:18-22). They could easily identify with the need to separate the good catch from the bad, having done so themselves numerous times.

Along the shore of the Sea of Galilee smaller nets were normally thrown over the side of the boat to gather fish. The specific Greek word the Lord used here however, was *sagene*, which speaks of a *large net*. Customarily this type of net was strung between two boats forming a semi-circle. The bottom of the net was weighed down with just enough weight to drag along the floor of the sea while the top part had floats attached to it to keep it near the surface. The other members of the fishing team on shore holding the ropes that were fastened to the ends of the net would then pull it to the shore. In the process schools of fish were caught in the net.¹

Of course, all types of fish and sea creatures were trapped in the net. Under the law, specific instructions were given by God as

to what was *clean* and *unclean*. In other words, what was edible and non-edible. For example:

"These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you. They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination" (Lev. 11:9-11).



According to these dietary laws, those under the law were permitted to eat only fish that had scales like the *telapia* fish that was common to the Sea of Galilee. Today it is widely known as "St. Peter's fish." On the other hand catfish, which are bottom feeders, were not kosher; therefore, they were never on the menu, along with oysters and crabs. So when the fisherman drew in the net it was necessary to methodically separate the clean from the unclean, the wholesome from the unwholesome.

A SPIRITUAL COMPARISON

As we noted, the Lord likens the kingdom to a net that is cast into the sea. Throughout the Scriptures the sea is a symbol of *humanity*, namely the nations, races, peoples, and multitudes (Dan. 7:2-7 cf. Rev. 17:1,15). Into this sea of humanity God has cast a great net that gradually sweeps across the affairs of men. The net represents the *influence* of the kingdom in the world, which was all pervasive in time past, and this will again be the case in the future day of the Lord. As God's chosen people were scattered throughout the nations of the world they took the truth of the kingdom and its message of righteousness with them.

While the parable of the drag-net is limited in scope to the consummation of the Jewish age at the Second Coming of Christ, we have many examples of the influence of the kingdom in the lives of those who came in contact with it in time past. Here are a few cases in point:

During the Babylonian captivity old King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream; consequently, he sought out the wise men and magicians of his court to reveal to him the dream and the interpretation thereof. When the king said, in Daniel 2:5 "the thing is gone from me" he was not referring to the dream, but to the decree that was gone from him. In short, if they couldn't tell him the dream and what it meant they would be cut in pieces, which by no means was an idle threat.

Nebuchadnezzar *purposely* withheld the dream from these so-called seers to insure he received the proper interpretation. When Daniel learned about the decree he sought the face of God concerning the dream and its interpretation. As Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar he revealed to the king that he had seen a "great image," which, as we know, represented the successive Gentile world empires that would ultimately be destroyed by the kingdom of God.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

The *influence* of the truth of this kingdom, under Daniel's ministry, gradually brought Nebuchadnezzar to a fuller understanding of the ways of God and eventually to salvation. Near the end of his life, after his prideful heart was crushed, he fully acknowledged the true and living God with these words:

"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven...I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation... Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Dan. 4:34,37).

King Nebuchadnezzar is an example of one of the “good fish” caught in the net. Another would be Darius, the king of the Medes and the Persians that conquered Babylon after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Once again, Daniel faithfully represented the *influence of the kingdom* in Media-Persia, this time by his righteous actions.

You will recall how the presidents and princes of Darius’ empire were envious of Daniel when he was placed over them. They were so enraged that they set out to find some fault in him—stealing, kickbacks, fornication, anything to discredit him in the eyes of the king. After weeks of secretly observing the prophet, to their dismay they could find no error or fault in his actions (Dan. 6:4). We wonder how believers today would measure up under this type of scrutiny.

These princes knew if they were going to find a fault in Daniel they would have to do so by deceitfully destroying him in regard to the law of his God. Since most ancient kings believed they were an extension of the gods, they often required that their subjects fall before them in worship. Privately the princes flattered the king with sweet words of reasonableness to make a decree that if anyone in his kingdom prayed to any other god than the king they should be cast into the den of lions. The princes, of course, knew that Daniel was a devout man and would never alter his routine. Without fail, three times a day, facing Jerusalem, Daniel offered prayers of

thanksgiving to God. When the prophet learned of the decree he went straight to his room to pray, “as he did aforetime.”

When the plot of the princes was exposed it was too late for Darius to save Daniel because according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, a decree could not be changed (Dan. 6:8). Darius loved Daniel and held him in high esteem as a godly man. The whole affair of Daniel and the lions den was a *life-changing* experience for Darius. The king fasted all night and at first light he went to the lion’s den and “cried with a lamentable voice” to Daniel saying, “servant of the living God,” hoping to hear the voice of his friend. Of course, the rest is history! Darius was so moved by the events of those two days that he made the following decree:

“I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions” (Dan. 6:26,27).

The arrival of the Magi from the east two years after the birth of Christ is another example of *influence* of the kingdom message in the regions beyond the borders of the chosen nation. Even though these wise men lived in the east, they were well aware of the promise of a coming Messiah. When they arrived at Jerusalem

their inquiry is significant: “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:2). Of course, Herod the Great wasn’t about to take this lying down—he was the king of the Jews, or at least he thought so. But in reality he was not the rightful heir to the throne of David.

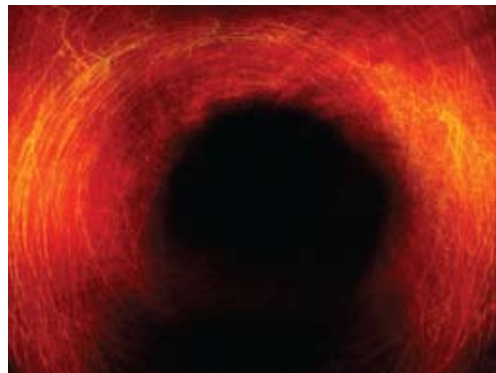
The Magi were part of the *good* catch in the net while Herod was part of the *bad* that had been collected along with the good. This is the primary focus of the parable, that is, the *separating* of the good and bad, the righteous from the unrighteous when the Lord returns in a flaming fire of vengeance at the close of the Great Tribulation. While the parable of the wheat and tares is somewhat similar, it pertained more to the children of the devil who were deceivers, whereas the parable of the dragnet is much broader in scope. It includes the entirety of the sea of humanity.

THE FISHERMAN

“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:49,50).

Once again we have the Lord’s own interpretation of the various details of the parable being discussed. When Christ returns at His Second Coming at the end of the age He is going to send His angelic host to man the net. As we know, the elect angels are spirit

beings who are the ministers of God. They are the *fishermen* that methodically separate the good from the bad. The angels will gather the righteous into the blessings of the millennial kingdom, but the unrighteous that were snared in the kingdom net will be separated from the righteous and cast into the furnace of fire.²



Since we know the Great White Throne Judgment does not transpire until 1,000 years after the Second Coming, we can safely conclude that these unbelievers will be removed from the earth to suffer in the furnace of fire located in *Hades* (Luke 16:19-31). At the close of the millennium, all unbelievers of all ages will be summoned to the Great White Throne to receive their sentence in the lake of fire, commonly known as *hell*. Albert Barnes states in this regard, “Our Savior never fails to keep before our minds the great truth that there is to be a day of judgment...He came to preach salvation, and the remarkable fact, also, that the most fearful accounts of hell and the sufferings of the damned, in the Scriptures, are from His lips.”³

The Lord's own literal interpretation of the parable of the dragnet is the deathblow to the teaching of Universalism/Universal Reconciliation, which essentially says that God is a God of love who would never condemn anyone to eternal torment. He will simply discipline all unbelievers for a short period and then receive them into His eternal presence. This teaching has no Scriptural basis whatsoever.

“The net represents the *influence* of the kingdom in the world...”

Yes, God is a God of love. In fact, He loved us so deeply that He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins. God has made a provision for *all* but only those who appropriate this provision by *faith* will have the blood of Christ applied to their life for the forgiveness of their sins (Eph. 1:7 cf. 2:8,9). We must always remember that *God sets the standard*, to which the following passages bear witness:

“For whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8,9).

Christ is our Passover! (I Cor. 5:7). In Egypt, it was God who established the Passover to which Christ is the fulfillment. The

Lord instructed the Hebrews to *apply* the blood to the lintel and the doorpost and in so doing God would spare their firstborn. The judgment of God would pass over them because they were under the blood. Those who failed to apply the blood in faith that night witnessed the death of their firstborn.

The *holiness* of God always demands justice against sin. Calvary is a supreme example as to what degree God hates sin. Those who reject Christ as their personal Savior place themselves in great peril because they refuse to respond to Him in faith. Consequently, when they die, they will be found in their sins having *rejected* the Sin Bearer. It will not be necessary for God to condemn them because they are condemned already for not having believed on the Son, according to John 3:18. The Great White Throne is merely the sentencing phase of the trial to determine their degree of punishment, according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15).

Hell was originally created for the devil and his angels. When man followed Satan in his rebellion against God he placed himself in danger of this everlasting fire if he rejected God's gracious offer of salvation. When a man or woman dies without Christ they will stand before God in their sins, as we have seen. They will **always** be sinners because they rejected the Sin Bearer; consequently there must **always** be punishment—eternal punishment! The holiness of God demands it (Isa. 6:1-7).

But is this punishment eternal? The Lord Himself answers the

question. When Christ sits on the throne of His glory the angels will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous will stand on His right hand and the unrighteous on His left.

“Then shall He [*The Sin Bearer*] say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting [*aionios*] fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

“And these [the unsaved] shall go away into everlasting [*aionios*] punishment: but the righteous into life eternal [*aionios*]” (Matt. 25:46).

The Greek *aion* translated “ages” can refer to a period of time with a beginning and an ending or it can mean perpetuity of time, eternity. The context will help to determine which usage was intended by the Spirit. Here in verse 46 the righteous are said to go into “life eternal.” The term “eternal” here is the Greek word *aionios*, the adjective form of *aion*, which according to Thayer means “without end, never to cease, everlasting.” When this term is used by way of *comparison* such as we have here in Matthew 25:41 and 46 it teaches us the following: what is true of the saved, that is, they have *eternal* life, is true of the unsaved insofar as they will suffer *everlasting* punishment (See also Dan. 12:2).

We thus conclude that the believers who enter into the millennial kingdom whether in their resurrected or natural bodies have *eternal life*. I think everyone would be in agreement on this point. If that’s true, and it most certainly is, then the unbelievers’

descent into everlasting fire (hell) is also eternal because the exact same word is used, not once here in Matthew 25, but twice (Vers. 41,46). If you say “everlasting” is not really everlasting in regard to the unbeliever then you must also teach that the believer does not have eternal life either.

It is often asked, “But what about those who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel? In our finite understanding, we must humbly submit ourselves to two things: First, God is *omniscient* and second, the Judge of the earth will do *right* (Psa. 139:1-6 cf. Gen. 18:25).

“Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord” (Matt. 13:51).

A companion of a newly converted Christian said to him one day, “Can you tell me where hell is?” After a moment’s hesitation the young Christian said, “Yes, it’s at the end of a Christless life.” Dear friend, we want you to know that God loves you and Christ died for your sins at Calvary. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and God will wonderfully save you from your sins according to the riches of His grace. Remember, and remember well the words of the evangelist: “I lift up the storm signal now, and warn you to escape from the coming judgment.”

The End!



Endnotes

1. ©iStockphoto.com/Ben Brooks.
2. ©iStockphoto.com/Eva Serrabassa.
3. *Notes on the New Testament* by Albert Barnes, page 148, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Question Box

“Could you tell me what Hebrews 6:1,2 is talking about when it mentions the doctrine of baptisms?”

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

Here the writer is telling the Hebrews to *leave* all of the various Old Testament baptisms, called “washings” in Hebrews 9:10 (where the Greek word for “washings” is *baptismos*). However, it should be pointed out that this is not the Apostle Paul telling members of the Body of Christ that baptism is no longer a part of God’s program. If this were the case, then these verses would also be saying that the doctrines “of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” were also no longer a part of God’s program, and we know from I Corinthians 15 and II Thessalonians 1:9 that such is not the case.

It must rather be remembered that this epistle is an epistle that is written, as it says, to the Hebrews, and there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the Body of Christ. And the Hebrews of that day were not supposed to leave baptism behind. During this transition period from Law to Grace, God was still requiring water baptism (I Pet. 3:21) and good works (James 2:14-26) for salvation as James, Peter and John continued to go “unto the circumcision” with the gospel of the kingdom (Gal. 2:9). Like the Law itself, God did not intend for baptism to be left behind by the kingdom church (cf. Acts 21:20).

Hebrews 6:1 is rather using the word “*leaving*” in the same sense as when you “leave” grammar school. You don’t forget everything you learned in grammar school, nor do you leave it in the sense that you never use it again. Instead you *build upon* what you learned when you get to high school and college.

In the same way, these Hebrews are being told to leave “the principles” of the doctrines of baptism, resurrection and eternal judgment. This is consistent with the immediate context (5:11-14), where the writer points out their need of renewed attention to “the first principles.” In Hebrews 6:1, the writer then expresses his decision to *not* be “laying again the foundation” of these first principles, announcing his intention to “go on unto perfection” in the kingdom program. —Pastor Kurth

The Dimensions of the Mystery, Cont.

Measuring the Immeasurable

By Cornelius R. Stam

THE LENGTH OF IT

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Tim. 1:16).

Even as the mystery of God’s eternal purpose began to dawn, God was still showing His longsuffering to apostate Israel. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Paul says,

“But to Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom. 10:21).

Nor did even the setting aside of Israel as a nation imply that God’s patience had now been exhausted, for we have already seen that God concluded them all in unbelief *that He might have*

mercy upon all and Paul himself is the outstanding example of His grace and longsuffering, for God’s answer to Israel’s rebellion was—amazing fact!—the conversion of Saul, the rebel leader, and his commission to go and preach the gospel of the grace of God.

That God’s longsuffering is a particular characteristic of “this present evil age” is clearly set forth in Peter’s last recorded words, where he tells us what he has learned from Paul as to the delay in Christ’s return to judge and reign:

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul

also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you” (II Pet. 3:9,15).

But thus far we have dealt only with the length of *God’s patience in this present evil age*. Let our minds now go back before the world began and ahead to the ages to come if we would begin to “comprehend” the wonder of His eternal purpose.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

“According as *He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world...*” (Eph. 1:3,4).

“That in the ages to come *He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:7).

Think of it! Long before the world began we were on His heart and in His purposes, and in the ages to come He will use us to show to the universe what He can and will do for poor sinners who trust in Christ!

THE DEPTH OF IT

This dimension too is appropriately associated with the mystery, for not until the unfolding of the mystery do we come to what is called “the preaching of the cross.” True, the *fact* of the cross had been prophesied, but not all that the cross was to accomplish. Contrast even Peter’s accusations concerning the cross in his Pentecostal address with Paul’s boasting in it some years later.

Think, then, of the depth of sin and the depth to which our

blessed Lord had to stoop to save us from it. Read in Paul’s letter to the Philippians the record of Christ’s self-humbling:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery [a thing to be grasped after] to be equal with God:

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

“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

Meditate upon this passage and see how each phrase takes the Son of God another step downward, not into sin but into the sinner’s place of humiliation and shame and suffering until finally He has paid the uttermost farthing for sin.

Yes, we often read it hurriedly or quote it as a matter of fact, but it is an amazing and wonderful truth that

“We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

All this is bound up with the mystery by the simple fact that God had not been handicapped by human failure, for He had the cross in view as the great answer to man’s rebellion.

If Israel refuses to be the channel of blessing to the Gentiles, He shows them that He did not choose them because He *needed* them, for, setting them aside *He offers salvation full and free to all by grace through faith alone*. And why can He not justly do so when Christ



has died to pay for sin? When this has been learned by the children of Israel they will be saved and will become the instruments in God's hand to bring blessing and salvation to the nations.

And so God showed that He had not been taken by surprise when Israel refused the risen Christ. He had known exactly what they would do and had allowed these things to come to pass in order that His secret eternal purpose might be unfolded.

It is in regard to this very truth that the apostle cries:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).

THE HEIGHT OF IT

And need we point out to our readers how the idea of height is associated with the mystery?

After stating that we were all *“the children of disobedience”* and therefore *“by nature the children of wrath, even as others,”* our apostle

goes on to say in his Ephesian letter:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

“And hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6).

This is the high and exalted position of the simplest believer in Christ. *“Accepted in the Beloved One”* (Eph. 1:6), God looks upon him as already seated at His own right hand and ***“BLESSED WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN THE HEAVENLIES IN CHRIST”*** (Eph. 1:3).

O that we might comprehend this more fully! That we might walk by faith above the sorrows and sins of this world! That we might *occupy* our rightful position in Christ!

Paul himself doubtless comprehended this more fully than

any of us. How else could he have written about sitting in heavenly places while confined in a Roman dungeon? How else could he have exclaimed from that same dark prison, *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice?”* How else could so much joy and peace and glory have shined from that prison cell?

Yes, and even while in that prison, he prayed constantly for other saints as the Holy Spirit still intercedes for us all, that we might know

“What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

“Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:19-21).

THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE

Surely we shall never fully know the infinite love of Christ; the love that brought Him down from the glory of heaven to suffer agony and shame in our stead that He might have us to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But we can *begin* to know and enjoy that love here and now. And how better can we begin to know it than by measuring the breadth and the length and the depth and the height of His great purpose for us?

We have only begun to do this in this brief Bible study. Let us not stop here. Let us carry our rule with us constantly and measure carefully again and again those things which the heart of the Infinite has planned and prepared for us. Thus and thus alone shall we begin to know the love of Christ—*the love that passeth knowledge.*



The Giving of Thanks

We should be thankful. Thanksgiving requires the recognition of the Source. It implies contentment with what is given, not complaint...it excludes covetousness. Things can be material for sacrifice. The Father pours out His blessings on us; we, His creatures, receive them with open hands, give thanks, and lift them up as an offering back to Him...

Things are given to us to enjoy for awhile... What is not at all fitting or proper is that we should set our hearts on them. Temporal things must be treated as temporal things, received, given thanks for, offered back, but enjoyed.

—Elisabeth Elliot

A GUIDE TO GODLINESS

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1,2).

Our opening text provides us with all the motivation we need to “live soberly, righteously, and *godly*, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). If the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, it is only “*reasonable*” that we should live for Him! But how are we to do this? In the present series of articles, we hope to provide the reader with God’s own instructions as to how to live a godly life.

Bible students know that Romans 9-11 are parenthetical, and so our opening text in Romans 12:1,2 actually comes on the heels of the doctrine taught in Romans 6-8. And so while the *motivation* of a godly walk is found in Romans 12:1,2, we believe the *mechanics* of how to live a godly life are found in these previous chapters. And so we plan to examine this passage in detail, for we believe an understanding of Romans 6-8 provides a believer with God’s own guide to godliness.

After declaring man’s sinfulness and need of a Savior in Romans 1-3, the Apostle Paul clearly establishes how the Lord Jesus Christ paid for all of our sins on Calvary’s cross in Romans 3-5, and affirms that we can be saved from our sins by simple “*faith in His blood*” (Rom. 3:25). After concluding this discussion in Romans 5, Paul then asks,

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1).

“What shall we say then” to *what*? Why, to being saved from all our sins, past, present and future! Paul knew that the natural reaction to such grace is to think that we can now sin with impunity, and so anticipates this faulty reasoning and deals with it here. But before going into a detailed refutation of such a thought, Paul’s initial response is to burst out an exclamation:

“God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:2).



After Paul’s outburst fully expresses his revulsion at such a thought, he immediately settles in to responding to this question in a definitive manner. His words “*How shall we*” seem to argue, “After all God has done for us, in freeing us from sin, how can we even *think* of grieving Him by continuing in sin?”

This is called Grace motivation. God does not tell us, as He told Israel, “If you are good I will bless you.” That’s Law motivation, the “carrot and stick” approach,¹ and it does not work in the present dispensation of grace! God rather tells us, “I have *already* blessed you (Eph. 1:3), now won’t you *walk worthy* of My blessing? (Eph. 4:1).”

We see an illustration of this kind of motivation in Genesis 39. When Joseph was tempted to sin with his master’s wife, he spoke of all that his master had done for him and then asked, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (v. 9). Joseph could have rationalized, “I’m far from home. Who’s going to know?” Or, “God seems to have forsaken me anyway, in allowing me to be enslaved. I don’t owe Him anything!” Despite his difficult life, he instead remained loyal to the master who had so blessed him, and we should do the same!

If we were to hear of a drunkard who continued to drink after receiving a new liver, we would be outraged. We should be similarly outraged at the thought of continuing in sin after God has given us a new *heart*.

We might compare our situation to the foreign diplomats in Washington D.C., who have what is called “diplomatic immunity,” and cannot be prosecuted for breaking our laws. Because of this, we are outraged when occasionally we hear of one who has flagrantly broken our laws, simply because he is immune from prosecution. Believers saved by grace have similar immunity to the eternal condemning power of the Law of Moses, and it is outrageous for us to consider committing the

sins for which God will punish unbelievers in Hell for all eternity. Speaking of the sins that he enumerates in Ephesians 5:3-5, Paul goes on to say,

“...because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

“Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph. 5:6,7).

Grace is *not* a license to sin, although many Christians are deceived by “vain words” saying that it is (Eph. 5:6). This is similar to the “lying words” Jeremiah warned Israel about:

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

“Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely...

“And come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations” (Jer. 7:8-10).

Liars were telling Israel that the sacrifices they brought to the house of God delivered them so they could continue in sin. God’s real purpose in giving Israel these things was to provide them with a safety net, in case they fell into sin. But in response to these lying words, they had begun to use their safety net as a *hammock*, lounging comfortable in the sins for which innocent animals had died.²



It reminds us of how our welfare system is similarly designed as a safety net for our people, in case they fall upon hard times. There are many words that people use to describe those who use this safety net as a hammock, and none of those words are very flattering. God forbid that *we* who are saved by the blood of *Christ* should ever consider using that precious blood as a hammock to lounge comfortably in iniquity.

May we rather be found as a people who fervently serve the Lord even though we know we are eternally secure. Men also have words for the boss’s son who works fervidly even though he knows he cannot be fired, and all of these words are very becoming. May these be the words used to describe each of us as eternally-secure believers!

It is human nature to want to sin, for even beside our natural bent to transgress God’s laws, sin is the one thing we cannot have as believers, and men always seem to want most what they cannot have! Adam was king of the world, but wanted the fruit of the one tree he could not have. Ahab owned many lands as king of Israel, but wanted the *one* land that the Law wouldn’t allow him to have (I Kings 21:1-16). And as the king’s son, Amnon was Israel’s most eligible bachelor and could have had any woman in the kingdom, but wanted the *one*

woman he couldn't have (II Sam. 13:1-4). Well do these examples of human nature illustrate how as the King's sons, God "*giveth us richly all things to enjoy*" (I Tim. 6:17), and yet we long for the *one* thing we cannot have, *sin!*

This is *natural*, but "the natural man" is not a good thing in Scripture (I Cor. 2:14)! When they were hungry, it was natural for Israel to remember the good things they had to eat in Egypt, and to forget how miserable their lives were as slaves to Pharaoh. Likewise it is natural for us to remember "the pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25), and to forget that we were slaves or "*servants of sin*" (Rom. 6:17), and how miserable our lives were in those days!

Next, the Apostle goes on to explain exactly what he means when he says here in Verse 2 that we are "dead to sin":

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).

We are "dead to sin" because we have been baptized into Christ's death. Here the apostle speaks not of *water* baptism, for water baptism does not place us "into Jesus Christ." The core meaning of baptism is *identification*.

In the Bible's very first baptism (I Cor. 10:1,2), Israel wasn't sure if the Red Sea waters might close as mysteriously as they had opened, but they knew for sure what would happen if they tarried for the armies of Pharaoh! In entering the Red Sea they loudly proclaimed, "*We're with Moses!*" and thus *identified themselves* with him. Likewise the Lord's baptism with water *identified* Him as Israel's Messiah (John 1:31). His death was also called a baptism (Luke 12:50) for He was "*numbered with*" or *identified* with "*the transgressors*" (Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:27,28). And when James and John wanted to be identified with the Lord in the glory of His kingdom (Mark 10:35-37), He asked if they were willing to identify themselves with Him first in the suffering of death (v. 38).

And so the baptism of Romans 6:3 is the baptism by which we are identified with Christ the moment we believe the gospel. It is at that moment that we are "*baptized into Jesus Christ*" (cf. I Cor. 12:13). Paul says that as many as have experienced this baptism were also baptized into His death. And while *water* baptism gives us no power over sin (the subject of this passage) *this* baptism gives us *plenty* of power over sin! Allow us to explain:

Before you were saved you *had* to sin, because *everything you did was sin* in the eyes of God. Even an amoral thing like plowing a field is sin if done by an unbeliever (Prov. 21:4). Even *righteous* works done by unbelievers are considered *self-righteous* "*iniquity*" (Isa. 64:6; Matt. 7:22,23). No wonder Paul says of the unsaved, "there is *none* that doeth good, *no not one*" (Rom. 3:12)!

But while you had to sin before you were saved (because everything you did was sin) *you don't have to sin any more!* Now when you do good works, God sees them as good works! Your baptism into Christ has broken sin's tyrannical power over you, and given *you* power over *it!* What a shame when we fail to *use* our new-found power!

It reminds us of how there was a time in this country when women and African-Americans could not vote. Now that they *can*, it is sad when they *don't*. Similarly, now that we *can* say no to sin, what a shame if we *don't*! Years ago, the National Library Service ran an effective reading campaign that said, "If you *do not* read, you are no better off than one who *cannot* read." Similarly, if we *do not* avoid sin, we are no better off than the unsaved who *cannot* avoid sin.

"...while *water* baptism gives us no power over sin...*this* baptism gives us *plenty*..."

The most important thing to remember about our baptism into Christ's death is that *death ends all relationships!* The marriage relationship, the master/slave relationship that was still present in Paul's day, all ended at death. And our baptism into Christ also effectively ends the master-slave relationship we had with sin. Here's how it works.

When the Lord was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21), sin became His master, as it was once ours, demanding His death, as it once demanded ours. But when He died, He died to sin, and sin no longer has any claim on Him (Rom. 6:4,5). And when we trust Christ, we are baptized into His death, ending *our* master/slave relationship to sin.

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

The word "*that*" here indicates that God had a *purpose* in identifying us with Christ in His death and burial. It was so that He might also identify us with Christ in His resurrection! After His resurrection, the Lord began a new life, free from sin, *and so should we!*

The Lord rose from the dead on the eighth day and was given *a new beginning*, and the number "eight" in Scripture is frequently associated with *new beginnings*. God made six days, a day of rest, then determined that on the eighth day we would begin a new week. "Eight souls" (I Pet. 3:20) stepped off the ark after the flood to a new beginning. Eight individuals in the Bible were raised from the dead and given a new beginning. And just as our Lord's resurrection on the eighth day gave *Him* a new beginning, we who are identified with Him in this resurrection are similarly given a new beginning, and encouraged to "*walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:4). Oh that the many unbelievers who long to "start all over" in life could know that such an aspiration is not just a fantasy, but can be a reality *in Christ!*

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5).

Our burial with Christ was actually a *planting*. Even a suburban-grown boy like this writer knows the difference between *planting* and *burying*. Bad guys *bury* the murder weapon, hoping it will never be found, and the person we used to be was “*buried with Him*” (v. 4), never to rise again. But farmers *plant* seed, hoping it will *rise again* and bring forth fruit. And so we read here that our burial with Christ was actually a *planting*, for God hopes we will rise again and bring forth fruit unto Him.

We see an illustration of this when God *planted* Israel in Canaan (Isa. 5:1-7), and expelled the “stones” of the Canaanite nations, expecting spiritual fruit from all His efforts in Israel’s behalf (v. 2). When they brought forth only the wild fruit of sin, God was confounded, for He could



not have done any more for them than what He did (v. 4). In the same way, God could not have done any more for *us* than what He has done. God forbid that we should bring forth the wild fruit of sin in response to all His efforts on our behalf.

Because we died and were buried with Christ, “we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,” and will rise from the dead physically with Him if the Lord carries. But why does Paul bring *that up here*? Surely because God wants us to live the resurrection life *now*, in *this* life (Phil. 3:11). When we rise from physical death, we won’t sin any more, and God wants us to live that kind of life *now*!

In Acts 1:3 we learn how the Lord spent His earthly resurrection life when we read that He “*shewed Himself alive by many infallible proofs.*” Well, if we are to walk “in the likeness of His resurrection,” we should show ourselves to be *spiritually* alive by many infallible proofs of godliness in our lives, and follow Him in “*speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*” Of course we mean the kingdom proclaimed by Paul, not the kingdom of heaven on earth!

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6).

Many Christians wonder why they still have trouble with their “old man” if Paul says he is crucified. But while Paul says we ourselves “were” baptized into Christ’s death (v. 3,4), past tense, he says our old man “*is*” crucified with Him, *present tense*. Roman crucifixion meant

certain death, but it never meant *immediate* death. Since anyone freeing a crucified man risked execution himself, death was sure to follow crucifixion. But crucified men often lingered for hours and even days. And so it is with our “old man.” His demise is certain, for death or Rapture will rid us of him forever, but in the meantime he lingers.

But it should encourage the reader to remember that with his hands and feet nailed to a cross, a crucified man was powerless to make anyone do anything. Similarly, our old man has no *power* in our lives to *make* us sin. Crucified men *can*, however, *speak*, and this explains why we still have trouble with our old man. He is not shy about *suggesting* evil at every opportunity, but may God help us to treat him like the impotent influence that he is in our lives.

While the Lord taught that offending eyes should be plucked out and offending hands cut off, this would allow an eye and a hand to remain to continue in sin! What the Lord offers us here through Paul is far better, for our old man is crucified with Christ “that the *body* of sin might be destroyed.”

“For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7).

Death ends all earthly relationships. Because of this, it was the only hope of freedom for slaves in the early days of our country. Imagine Abraham Lincoln’s frustration, however, when after he freed the slaves many of them chose to remain with their masters! Then imagine *God’s* frustration when after Cyrus freed Israel from bondage, only about fifty thousand returned to Israel! (Ezra 2:64,65). Now imagine God’s frustration when “*he that is dead is freed from sin,*” but *continues* in sin!

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:8).

Here Paul speaks of his assurance of our future life of living and reigning with Christ in heaven. Why bring that up? Well, if we *really* believe we will live and reign with Christ, we will live better *now*.

A president who is elected in November doesn’t say to himself, “I have two months until I take office, I’d better live it up now, for after that I’ll have to behave myself!” If he did, the press would be all over him! In the same way, we who are destined to replace the fallen principalities and powers and rule with Christ in the heavens are “principality-elects.” And while we have not yet taken office, we have been elected and should already be reflecting the dignity of our future office *now*, in *this* life.

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

“For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:9-11).


The Lord Jesus Christ has not yet taken office, as Satan is still “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4). And yet He has already reckoned Himself alive unto God, and is already reflecting the dignity of His future office. Paul here encourages us to reckon the same to be true of ourselves, who died to sin with Him. May we too live unto God!

Notice that God doesn’t ask us to die to sin, He simply asks us to reckon we are already dead, which is much easier! Just as it is much easier for contemporary Americans to reckon ourselves dead to England than it was for 1776 Americans who had to actually fight the battle. God does not want us to be like the Japanese soldiers who didn’t hear of the end of World War II, and who were frequently found years later hiding in the islands of the Pacific, still fighting a war that was over long ago. He rather wants us simply resting in the victory that He won over sin at Calvary!

But can reckoning the battle to be over, and ourselves dead to sin, really help us? God here says it can, and we see a parallel in instances when we hear someone say, “All I needed to succeed was to find someone who believed in me!” Well, *God Himself* believes we are dead to sin, and it should give similar strength to us to reckon it to be so.

When this writer was a teen, we attended a Christian youth meeting where this truth was vividly brought to life. A wooden plank was stretched across two inverted metal buckets, and a teen girl was blindfolded and asked to stand on the plank in the middle. Two strong young men were then instructed by a narrator to carefully lift the ends of the plank off the buckets an inch or two. The narrator then proceeded to “describe” how the girl was being lifted so close to the ceiling that she had better duck, even though the boys (who had previously received instructions of what to do) were still holding her mere inches from the ground. As the girl ducked to avoid the ceiling, she lost her balance and fell off the plank. All because she reckoned something to be true of her position in life that simply wasn’t so.

Similarly, if we reckon ourselves alive to sin and prone to fall, it is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But if we reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, this too is likely to come a self-fulfilling prophecy!

And so just as the president-elect immediately begins to reflect the position given him by the voters, we should likewise reflect the position God has already given us in Christ. What a slap in the face of the voters it would be for a man to live disgracefully once elected to high office! May we as believers never choose to disgrace the grace that saves us! 

Endnotes

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BBS Letter Excerpts

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“Just discovered dispensational teaching. It has answered so many questions I have worried about for years. Just wish it had happened sooner. The Bible is like a new book to me. I had reached the place where I was really doubting God, because let’s face it, if you don’t study it this way, it really contradicts itself. I hated being so near to the end of my life and being so doubtful about God. Now I feel so much better.”

From Colorado:

“Pastor Stam’s writings changed my life, and I shall always be indebted to him. I’ve thanked God many times over the years for placing BBS literature in my hands.”

From Wisconsin:

“Your answer to me has just brought tears to my eyes. It’s so clear to me now. Praise God.”

From United Kingdom:

“Good afternoon to you. I have been a Christian for many years. I have only come into the understanding of dispensationalism just a few weeks ago. I think you will have to admit it is quite mindblowing.”

From Internet:

“Thank you brother, you are a great help to me. I am newly saved and I need to eat and drink to grow. Thanks for feeding me everyday and thanks for answering my question, it really helps me spiritually.”

From Wisconsin:

“You always ‘hit the nail on the head.’ No one can truly or fully understand the Word of God without rightly dividing it. Thank you.”

From Internet:

“Please bear with me for possible questions that I may ask as I study the subject of water baptism. To say the least, I’m beginning to stand uncompromisingly for the propagation of the mystery.”

From Illinois:

“I am writing this letter to express my gratitude for the daily devotion from the *Berean Bible Society*. I am enclosing a gift. Thank-you for being of guidance to me this last year. I have kept each daily devotion in a folder in my computer for future review.”

From Internet:

“I do want to thank you for the paper on water baptism. In fact I got a two-for-one deal since the last issue of the *Searchlight* also contained a great overview from Pastor Stam. This has been very beneficial to me and my wife, and has made the defense of our position much stronger and more persuasive when sharing this with our friends.” (Pastor Stam’s *Our Oneness in Christ* is being reprinted in booklet form.—Ed).

From Pennsylvania:

“The Bible has been a much more interesting book to me since I learned to rightly divide the Word.”

From Philippines:

"I really appreciate your ministry for the furtherance of the Grace Gospel to the world via this very powerful medium, the internet. The articles are really helpful for us new workers as reference and guide for our Sunday Schools and sermons."

From Internet:

"I have a copy of 'Two Minutes With the Bible' by Cornelius R. Stam that was given to my parents in 1977. I was wondering if you are still publishing copies of this book. If so, how much are they? I want to get some for my friends."

From Tennessee:

"Thank you for your time and answers to my questions. Putting all the pieces of the dispensational puzzle together is no quick or easy task. Even the best commentaries do not always agree with each other along the lines of each and every detail."

From Wisconsin:

"By the way, the John Baker videos on the BBS web site are cool. I really liked how he did your Question Box about Galatians 6. I actually didn't read it carefully when it was in the *Searchlight*, but when I watched the video I thought it was a really good Question Box, well written and well-answered." (For further information about this new feature, see News and Announcements on Page 30.—Ed).

From South Dakota:

"My wife and I are looking forward to our time together at the BBF conference in Tabor, South Dakota!! Our fellowship will be good, because the Lord and His Word will be studied, rightly divided."

From Connecticut:

"Please send 3 copies of the 'new and improved' *Things That Differ*. It's exciting to see what a marvelous job you are doing in keeping Pastor Stam's legacy alive, and making his writings attractive to 21st century readers. Of course the message is what's important, but, as they say, eye appeal goes a long way!"

From Internet:

"Thank you for the reply. I spent a few hours with my pastor and spoke to him about the different dispensations that the world has been involved in through its history. But it was to no avail as I could tell. He listened intently and the look in his eye was that no one was home, but I tried. I believe that what I have been shown about the different economies of God, I must tell my friends and loved ones. I realize they may not receive this very important information that has helped me in a tremendous way in the study of God's Word. But I love them and want the best for their lives."

From Wyoming:

"I am enclosing a check to help with your BBS publication. It is good to have the Word, rightly divided and be able to understand the differences. Our ladies Bible class just finished the Philippians study."

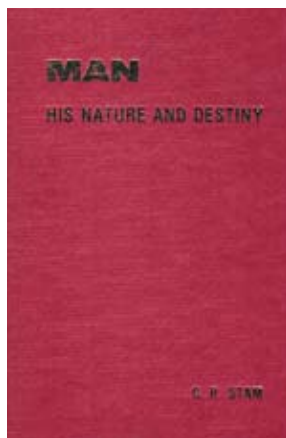
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Paul Beseches the Church (Part 5)

1 Corinthians 1:10

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

In this letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul dealt with two major problems within the Body of Christ there. The Church was divided into factions and there was flagrant immorality. He appealed to the Corinthians to be united. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (I Cor. 1:10). The Corinthian Church was breaking up into factions based on who each group thought should be their leader (see I Cor. 1:11-12). Paul knew that this was detrimental to the Grace Message that the Lord had entrusted to him. He was calling on them to come together in proclaiming the same message (*“that ye all speak the same thing”*), that they might be united in their thinking (*“in the same mind”*), and in purpose (*“in the same judgment”*) as an assembly of saints.

Paul made two things very clear. One, it is Jesus Christ and not Paul (or any other man) who is to be looked to as Lord and Savior (I Cor. 1:13), and that their trust should be in the power of the cross and not in man’s wisdom (I Cor. 1:18-2:5). (Note that Paul makes direct reference to the Lord Jesus fifteen times in the first seventeen verses of this epistle.) Even though others, such as Apollos, ministered with him in the Grace Gospel (I Cor. 3:5-9), it was to Paul that the

Grace Message was specifically given (I Cor. 3:10). He did not promote himself, but he did proclaim and defend the message and the apostolic authority he had received from Jesus Christ, who personally commissioned him as the Apostle to the Gentiles (I Cor. 15:8-10; cf. Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:11-12, 15-16; 2:7-9; Eph. 3:8ff; etc.).

The major theme of I Corinthians is that God has called all believers *“unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”* (I Cor. 1:9). Underlying this truth is the need for each member of the Body of Christ to exercise both moral and ethical discipline in their personal life (I Cor. 9:24-27) and to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ over their life (I Cor. 6:19-20) as revealed through His Apostle, Paul (I Cor. 14:37; 15:1-4; cf. Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:3-9). Not pride, but apostolic authority led Paul to beseech the Corinthians (and the entire Body of Christ) to be followers of him concerning how he lived and what he taught in every church he went to (see I Cor. 4:15-17). He qualified this by saying *“be ye followers of me (Paul) even as I also am of Christ”* (I Cor. 11:1), thus reinforcing the fact that it is the Lord Jesus Himself we are to have our mind, heart, and soul fixed on and not His messenger. The Grace of God is not just a subject of study but a vital truth that is to be incorporated into every believer’s life through faith. Just as the Apostle Paul did, we are to believe it and to live it *“to the glory of God”* (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17,23).

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Latest from the Lending Library: One of the first things your editor did after getting saved in 1970 was to start receiving BBS *Lending Library* tapes. The reel-to-reel tapes of those days eventually gave way to cassettes, but technology has turned yet another page, and CDs are now the standard. For some time we have offered our Bible studies for sale on CD, but we are pleased to announce that they are now also available to borrow. Just contact Sam and Ruth Castrova, and they'll get you started. You can write them at 7900 Barbour Store Rd., Willow Spring, NC 27592, or at lendinglibrary@nc.rr.com.

New Web Site Feature: Not long ago our good friend John Baker of Cooper City, Florida, began making creative videos from our *Two Minute* daily devotionals and posting them on *Godtube*. These inviting videos display the text of the message in restful segments against an attractive background, accompanied by worshipful music. After over 50,000 hits on *Godtube*, John began doing the same with the Searchlight's monthly *Question Box*. Of course, Brother Baker began by asking our permission for all this, and now he has given us his permission to post his engaging videos on our BBS website. Just click on "New Videos," sit back and enjoy, and pray with us that God will use this new format to bring the grace message to even more hungry hearts.

New Opportunity: If you are skilled in accounting and business management, and would be interested in applying your expertise to the Lord's work, we here at BBS would like to hear from you. When *Berean Bible Institute* student Jim Tollar became our business manager earlier this year, he hoped to be able to give us four years of service while he finished his training at BBI. But now that the crying need on the mission field has moved him to advance his departure to Kenya, we'll be looking to fill his position sometime in the near future. If this is something you might prayerfully consider, just let us know, so that we may begin to review applications.

If you've ever wondered where we get the graphics you see sprinkled throughout the *Searchlight*, one of our sources is Designpics.com. They give us such a generous discount that when we chose one of their photos for this month's front cover, we felt this would be a good opportunity to reward their kindness with a word of thanks. Be sure to look them up if you wish to adorn the printed message of your ministry or secular endeavor.

The *Yaquina Head Lighthouse* is located in Newport, Oregon. Once known as Cape Foulweather Lighthouse and active since August 1873, this 93 foot tall light is the tallest in Oregon.

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“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57).

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GERMANTOWN, WI 53022-0756

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