

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2010



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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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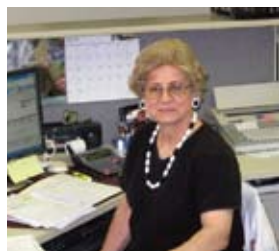


From the President's Desk

Dear Brethren,

Wise old Solomon once said, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." There is a time to begin, and there is time to bring things to a close. After nearly 15 years of faithful service, our Fran Ochalek decided to retire in September. She has been a fixture at the front desk all these years taking calls and working with accounts receivable. Fran was in banking for many years so she was a natural at it when she joined the staff.

But the time has come to kick back and smell the roses—literally! Fran has a small greenhouse behind her house where she enjoys working with her unique plants and flowers during the warmer months of the year. So she'll be keeping herself busy. We are going to miss her, but we are confident she will continue to be greatly used of the Lord in her golden years.



The search for someone to fill Fran's position didn't take long when we learned that Christine Mulholland was considering full-time employment. She was already on staff part-time with our Sunday School Program, so we simply moved her over to the front desk to take Fran's responsibilities. From this point forward, when you call the *Berean Bible Society*, the warm, friendly voice at the other end of the line will be Christine. As a gifted Graphic Design Artist, Christine will continue to work with our Sunday School Curriculum as she's able to integrate it into her schedule.

Christine and her husband Brandt have been married for 14 years and have one son, Caleb, who is currently in 7th grade. Brandt works in the "trades" and often helps us out here at BBS with our repairs around the building. Our facility is 16 years old this year and consequently it's beginning to need more and more tender loving care.

Please keep Christine in prayer as she gets acclimated to her new position. There is quite a learning curve at this particular work station, what with processing orders and getting acquainted with Corporate QuickBooks.® Thanks again for your interest in the Lord's work. You are appreciated more than mere words could ever convey.

Yours in the fellowship of His grace,
Paul M. Sadler, President



Letter Excerpt *Extra*

From California:

"I think it was the fall of 1999 when I first found Berean Bible Society. Let me praise God and tell you, I've had ten wonderful years of enjoying God's grace and peace, and the knowledge of the mystery that liberated me from the bondage of the law. Before I started reading Stam and O'Hair, etc., I thought I had committed the unpardonable sin. I was in a miserable state of depression for four years. One part of the Bible said I was lost and the other part gave me hope. No one ever taught me why Christ chose Paul, or the clear fact that there are two gospels, and we're living in the age of grace. No one ever taught me Jesus was teaching Israel only, or that He sent the twelve to Israel only. I sat through so many wasted sermons which twisted and forced Jesus' parables on people today. Listened to *so many* false teachers getting rich and requiring more than God does to get into the kingdom. So many false preachers disgracing God.

"Trying to find out *if* I was saved or *if* I could get saved, I visited twelve churches over four years, and personally talked to six preachers. Then imagine me reading Galatians 1 and 2, realizing Peter and James and John stayed with the Jews because Peter had the gospel of the circumcision. *Wow*, that answered a lot of very scary questions and "contradictory" understandings I had while reading James and John and Hebrews and Revelation. Imagine learning the Bible is actually made up of either prophecy about earth and Israel *or* mystery about heaven and non-Jews. Or my first read of James 1:1. Ha-ha-ha, what *joy* filled my soul as I was enlightened. Hey, that's someone else's mail. I can't cash their paycheck, and I don't have to pay their bills either! Praise God. The pressure is *off*! My heart laughs because the eyes of my understanding were enlightened. Daily I still praise God and live out of respect because I *am* accepted in Christ. Christ did it all, all to Him I owe. Christ is my "Sky Marshal." I have a ticket to heaven, a green card, a spiritual passport. *No power* can skyjack me.

"Terror filled my soul as I left my legalistic denomination behind, but it was quickly squashed by the light of God's liberating grace! The grace of God I found in the teachings of the books I bought in the BBS bookstore totally changed my life, and hopefully many more lives as I live here on earth. Thanks be to GOD!"



The Keys to Spiritual Growth

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

As a young boy growing up in the hills of Pennsylvania, I often walked home from school down through a windy hollow that was well populated with oak trees. In the fall of the year, when a blanket of frost covered the ground, the leaves of those old oak trees broke out into a symphony of colors that was absolutely breathtaking. The rays of the sun danced off the red, yellow, and golden brown leaves, leaving me with the feeling I was walking through a wonderland. Looking back, it was one of those times in life that memories are made of, to the praise of His glory.

It's amazing how, from a little acorn the size of a nickel, the mighty oak tree is born that one day will tower 60 to 75 feet into the air as it graces the horizon. God would have us, like the majestic oak, put down our spiritual roots deeply into the fertile soil of His Word that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this tree is known for how slowly

it grows, which can also be said of our spiritual growth. While many believers are looking for a simple formula to become spiritually minded overnight, the truth of the matter is it takes years to mature in the faith. With God's help, may it one day be said of us that we are a pillar of strength and stability like the magnificent oak.

But there is something else about this tree that is rather unusual. I noticed in the spring of the year when I walked down the old logging road that many of the leaves of the oak trees were still clinging to their branches. Even after winter's blast of freezing temperatures and howling winds, they were still hanging on. I understand now that it isn't until the tree buds in late spring that all the old leaves are shed. As we are going to see, the same is true in the Christian life. It is not until we bud spiritually by making an application of the grace of God in our lives that the old sinful habits that were once natural to us begin to fall away.

NEW LIFE

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”
—I Peter 2:2,3

The arrival of a baby is a monumental event. Needless to say, word of that little bundle of joy travels through the family faster than the speed of light. Everyone wants to know every detail, from what he or she weighed, to how long they were when they entered into the world. In the things of the Lord, we too are filled with joy when we learn that a lost soul has found new life in Christ. Both Peter and Paul use the metaphor of the *babe* to mark the beginning of this new birth. A metaphor is simply a figure of speech containing an implied comparison. It is a short phrase or word that is used to throw light on the truth. So we begin our new life in Christ as a newborn babe, spiritually speaking, with similar traits that characterize a new baby.

Babies love to eat, but it is a well-known fact that their diet is limited to milk after they are born. As they begin to grow, however, milk isn't enough to keep them satisfied, which they make mom and dad fully aware of by being inconsolable. So off to the store they go to purchase cereal and jars of baby food, the likes of which include sweet potatoes, carrots, green beans, broccoli, bananas, applesauce, etc. Before you know it, these little ones are old enough to raid the refrigerator and feed themselves.

Essentially, Peter says to his hearers in the above passage that as newborn babes they needed

to desire the sincere milk of the Word that they might grow spiritually. The “sincere milk” the apostle speaks of here is the *simple* things of the Word of God. It was necessary for them first to acquire a general understanding of creation and the fall. Then they needed to familiarize themselves with all the stories of the Bible, from the flood in Noah's day to the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus. This would prepare them to receive the deeper things of God and become mature believers. This is also true for the members of the Body of Christ, with the following addition: the basic training of babes in Christ today would include acquainting themselves with the teachings of grace found in Paul's epistles.

THE KEYS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The first key to spiritual growth is *commitment*. It is an integral part of our everyday life. What we commit ourselves to says a great deal about us. If a man, for example, is committed to making a name for himself in the financial world, his every waking hour is in pursuit of his dream. He becomes consumed with amassing wealth. Without a moment's hesitation, he can tell you where the Stock Market closed today and what the Dow Futures will be tomorrow. It's his life!

The signers of the *Declaration of Independence* made a commitment to establish a new nation, under God, with life, liberty and justice for all. They were committed to the cause of freedom, which cost them dearly. The following account gives us some idea of

the sacrifices they made so that we might live in a free country, without fear of persecution:



“Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty.

“At the battle of Yorktown, the British General Cornwallis had taken over Thomas Nelson’s home for his headquarters. Nelson quietly ordered General George Washington to open fire on the Nelson home. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his wife’s bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives after his fields and mill were destroyed. For over a

year, he lived in forest and caves, returning home only to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.”¹

As believers, our commitment is to be to the Lord and the things of the Lord. Once Christ has our undivided attention, He will direct our steps through the counsel of His Word. The operative word here is *change*. He will change our attitude and conduct if we are willing to submit ourselves to His will. Although circumstances may often be out of our control, we can control how we react to them when we have the right attitude. We are self-centered beings by birth, but when we live a Christ-centered life our heart’s desire is to please Him.

While the shelves of Christian bookstores these days are overflowing with books on “fulfillment,” only the Christ-centered life will bring true fulfillment and purpose into our lives. It is not until we take our commitment to Christ seriously that we truly begin to grow in grace. When we are committed to the Lord and His Word it will give us the correct perspective on the family, the workplace, the local church, and our fellowship with one another as believers in Christ.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16,17).

The second key to spiritual growth is *accepting the Word of God as the final authority in*

your life. It has been correctly said, “Many of our troubles occur because we base our choices on unreliable authorities: culture (‘everyone is doing it’), tradition (‘we’ve always done it that way’), reason (‘it seemed logical’), or emotion (‘it just felt right’).” These are four uncertain trumpets that will leave you wandering aimlessly through life without a moral compass, if you allow them to be your guide. The *standard* for the believer, without exception, must always be the Word of God.

Notice Paul says in the above passage “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” not *some* Scriptures. Inspiration guarantees that everything recorded in the Word of God is recorded accurately, whether it is what the Lord revealed by special revelation to Paul or the lies of Satan. Our faith must rest on the bedrock of the unchanging Word of God. It is the only reliable source of *truth* we have to guide us in the Christian life.

Once the Scriptures are accepted as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, they must be *received*. Your doctor might inform you of a new treatment for a serious medical condition you’ve been battling, but if you fail to receive it, it will do you little good. In this regard, Paul states to the saints at Thessalonica:

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (I Thes. 2:13).

We know the believers at Thessalonica had *received* from the Apostle Paul the fact that salvation was by grace through faith apart from works and were wonderfully saved. They had *received* the revelation from the Lord that Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, their apostle. They had also *received* the truth that they were members of the Body of Christ with a heavenly hope and calling, as this very epistle confirms. These believers *received* these things not as the word of men, whose word may or may not be true or accurate, but as it was the truth, the very Word of God.

The second key then to become spiritually minded is receiving the Word of God with an open mind. Even though we may not be able to comprehend fully the Trinity, of one God who eternally exists in three persons, nevertheless, we accept it by faith because it is the clear teaching of the Scriptures. One of the clear indicators that we are growing in grace is a *readiness* to accept what the Scriptures teach.

Studying the Scriptures is not about acquiring a knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible to impress others with how much you know. You can fill your mind with knowledge, but if you don’t apply what you’ve learned to your life it is of little value. You might know that you are to *love* others, but if you are cold and indifferent and have an air of superiority, knowledge has only served to puff you up.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

The third key to spiritual growth is to understand *the importance of rightly dividing the Word of truth*. The reason so many believers struggle in the Christian life is due to a failure to consistently rightly divide the Word. They mix the two programs of God together, as it were, and when they pour the batter into the mixing bowl of life, they wonder why everything seems so confusing. We must learn that not all Scriptures are written directly to us as members of the Body of Christ. What was true of believers under the law is not necessarily true of us under grace.

Right division is like a rudder of a ship. If the rudder is ignored, the ship will go off course, leaving the crew in peril. If it is used according to its intended purpose, it will keep the ship on course, bringing the vessel into safe harbor. Likewise, when we rightly divide the Word of truth, it will steer us in the right direction. This is essential since it will have a profound effect on our daily walk with the Lord. Here are a few examples of how rightly dividing the Word will keep your Christian life on course:

Which is Characteristic of Your Christian Experience?

Worship: In time past, the Lord's people offered blood sacrifices as an act of worship. The burnt offering, for example, "typified Christ offering Himself without spot to God in delight to do His Father's will, even in death." This was a *voluntary* sacrifice that the Lord Himself accepted on behalf of the believer at the door of the tabernacle. This act of

worship was well pleasing to God (Lev. 1:1-4).

With Calvary now a reality, under grace, we are no longer to offer dead sacrifices to God. Instead we are to present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). One of the ways we worship God today is by *voluntarily* offering to serve the Lord, whether it is sharing the message of grace with another believer or offering a word of encouragement to a friend who's faltering in the faith. This is what is acceptable to God under grace.



Which of the above is true of your Christian experience? If your answer is paragraph two, then you have effectively rightly divided the Word of truth.

Prayer: In time past, under the kingdom gospel, which was closely associated with signs, miracles, and wonders, the Lord promised His people: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). Furthermore, God often responded to their prayers by shaking the place where they assembled (Acts 4:29-31).

Under the gospel of the grace of God, our prayer life is characterized thusly: "Likewise the Spirit

also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26). So often we are uncertain what to pray for, seeing that we don’t know the mind of the Lord in many circumstances that aren’t addressed in the Scriptures. Therefore, we must always add to our prayers in such cases, “As it is according to Thy will, oh Lord.”

Which of the above is true of your Christian experience? Once again, if your answer is paragraph two, then you have effectively applied II Timothy 2:15.

Forgiveness: In time past, God’s forgiveness under the law was always based upon a like spirit. The Lord plainly states: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14,15).

Today, under grace, we are forgiven for Christ’s sake and encouraged to forgive others even as the Lord has forgiven us. “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). What greater motivation can there be to forgive others than the fact that Christ has forgiven us. He’s the supreme example of how we are to conduct ourselves in this matter.

Which of the above is true of your Christian experience? Here again, if your answer is paragraph two, then you have effectively applied right division in your study of the Scriptures.

As you can see, rightly dividing the Word of truth has a profound impact on every area of your life. The failure to apply this key explains why so many sincere believers are tossed around spiritually like fall leaves blowing in the wind. They are prime targets for those who lie in wait to deceive. If it is your heart’s desire to grow in grace, it’s essential to rightly divide the Word of God.

SPIRITUAL METAMORPHOSIS

Every student who has taken a biology class has studied *metamorphosis*. In the case of the caterpillar, this furry little creature spins a pad of silk on a small branch to support itself. Once the silken cocoon is spun the caterpillar enters an inactive phase, the duration of which is determined by the climate. During this period, the chrysalis gradually undergoes a transformation as the larval structures are replaced with those of the adult. At the appointed time, a beautiful butterfly emerges to stretch its wings and fly away. It is one of the miracles of nature that was ordained of God.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

The fourth and final key to spiritual growth is *transformation*, by the renewing of our minds. The term “transform,” used here in Romans 12:2 by the Apostle Paul, is the Greek word *metamorphoo*, which has the idea of *change*. It is the term from which we get our English word *metamorphosis*.

When we come to know Christ, we are given a new nature that is

created in righteousness and true holiness, but it isn't long before we realize we still possess the old Adamic nature. Although we are forgiven in Christ, the old sinful habits follow us like a shadow when we first start out in the faith. New believers are usually stunned when the sin nature raises its ugly head, manifesting itself in an uncontrolled temper, lying, cheating, unwholesome thoughts, etc. The reason Paul instructs us not to be conformed to this world is that the natural man revels in these things.




Like the old caterpillar that morphs into the beautiful butterfly, we are to be transformed; that is, have a change of mind. A renewed mind! God wants us to *think* differently. Have a different attitude! According to Philippians 4:8, we are to think on things that are *true*, in contrast to that which is untrue. Truth will expose error, whether it is the lie of evolution or organized religion. We are to think on things that are *honest*, which will enable us to maintain an impeccable character before others. We are also to think on things that are *pure* or free from moral defilement. In other words, don't allow yourself to become tainted with the immorality of this

world's system, whatever form it may take. Paul says, *flee* fornication, for this is the will of God (I Cor. 6:18 cf. I Thes. 4:3).

From the day we are born, we are selfish, self-centered beings, out for number one. As we yield to the new nature, grace will enable us to forsake the me, me, me attitude and have the mind of Christ. When Christ left heaven's glory, He wasn't thinking of Himself. Instead He humbled himself, taking on the form of a servant so that He might accomplish the will of His Father. **He was thinking of us!** Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." If you are growing in grace, *others* will hold a prominent place in your thought process. You won't have to be asked; you will already have dropped off a covered dish to that family in need.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

If these four keys are consistently applied to our Christian life, they will unlock the process of spiritual growth. Our inward man, the new man, will be renewed day by day when we set our affection on things above and not on the temporal things of this world. Like that mighty oak tree, may we be a pillar of strength and stability that others can look to as an example of how the Christian life is to be lived. The goal is to be conformed to the image of Christ and ultimately walk worthy of our calling to the praise of His glory. 

Endnote

1. Kenneth L. Dodge, *Resource*, Sept./Oct. 1992, pg. 5.



"...that from a child
thou has known the
Holy Scriptures..."

2 Timothy 3:15

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Key Verse: Philippians 1:29
"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

LESSON 16

TRUSTING GOD

IN THE HARD TIMES

Part 1

By Pastor Ken Lawson

Lesson Theme: God's lessons taught through pain

ENGAGE

Sometimes we ask, "Why me?" Why am I suffering so much when others seem to enjoy the pleasures of life? Is there a reason for suffering? Does God want to teach me something through my pain?

ENLIGHTEN

Introduction

Joni Eareckson Tada was an adventurous, carefree high school girl. She was pretty and one of the most popular girls in her class. She enjoyed horseback riding and bumming around with her friends. One day they all decided to take a trip to the lake. Unknown to her, she was about to begin a terrible and yet beautiful journey. It was a bright, sunny afternoon, and Joni (pronounced Johnny) swam out to a small dock a short distance from shore. When she got there, she lifted herself upon the dock and dove into the water. That is the last thing she remembered until she woke up in the hospital. It turned out that the water was only a few feet deep and when her head hit bottom, it broke her neck and severed her spinal

cord. She found herself a quadriplegic, unable to move her arms or legs. Fortunately, her mind was still very much intact but thoughts kept torturing her. Is my life over? Will I ever be normal? How can I live this way? She went through all the emotions including confusion, self-pity, anger, bitterness, and depression. That was the terrible part. Years later, as she reflected on her life, she could see that God had a beautiful and important service for her to perform for Christ. She has developed a ministry to victims of severe accidents and diseases that have left them permanently disabled. She has written a number of best selling books, has her own radio program called, "Joni and Friends," and makes a living by drawing beautiful pictures with a paint brush in her mouth. She is happily married, and her example has inspired thousands

to trust Christ and make their lives count for Him.

Asking the Hard Question

This leads us to ask, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” The first answer is that we live in a fallen creation that is subject to pain and death. The Bible says, “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). We cannot escape it. Somewhere and sometime in our lives we will all suffer pain, loss and death. Even God’s children are not immune. Paul had it right when he said, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:22-23). Someday the Lord Jesus is going to return to give us new, immortal bodies that will be eternal in the heavens, but until that day, we have to live in this sin-cursed world the best way we can.

Secondly, we see that pain and suffering are often the result of bad decisions or poor judgment on our part. A law of science says that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the moral world, it is much the same. As Paul says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). People who engage in smoking, drinking alcohol, drugs or premarital sex often reap accidents, disease, and premature death.

A third category of suffering comes from living a Christian life

and is called suffering for the name of Christ. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). This is the sweetest suffering of all because we know that we are pleasing God and gaining a crown that will be awarded us at Christ’s coming.

Discussion

Can you think of other examples of suffering that answers to each of the three categories mentioned above? Which do you think is the most common? The least common? Why? Do Christians still suffer for their faith today? How?

(Thoughts: 1. Sickness, accidents, death 2. Failing a test from failure to study 3. Losing a boyfriend or girlfriend by standing for Christian principles).

Getting Beyond the Hard Question

Sometimes we just don’t know why bad things happen. We have to throw our hands into the air and say, “Lord, I don’t know why this is happening, but I do know that you know and that you have allowed it for a purpose.” Years ago, there was a famous photograph of the earth taken from the moon. The caption read, “The things I know about God help me trust Him for the things I don’t know.” We know that God is good, loving, merciful, just, full of grace and truth and that He would not allow bad things into our lives except that they serve a greater

purpose that we cannot see clearly now. God is working all things after the counsel of His own will, and His plan will end in our receiving much more than we ever lost. God will receive the praise and adoration of His creation (Eph. 1:9-12). You might think of God's plan as a great tapestry that is being made through the ages. From beneath, it looks like a lot of loose ends, but from above (God's perspective), it is taking shape as a beautiful work of art. (Tapestry is a hand-woven rug or carpet made with complicated pictorial designs. It is often hung from a wall or ceiling).

Although our vision is limited here on earth, there are many things revealed by God in His Word that encourage us through the tough times. Often when we pray, we ask God to take away the trial or situation that is causing us pain. Sometimes He does, but other times He allows it to remain to teach us things about Himself and about ourselves. God does not directly cause bad things to happen such as accidents, disease, or loss of a loved one, but He can use them to serve His purpose for us.

Christian Character

Paul spoke in glowing terms of our blessings in Christ such as being justified, having peace and access to God in prayer. Then he continues by saying, "And not only so, but we glory (rejoice) in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4, parenthesis added). God has drawn back the curtain, so to speak, to show us something

about His purpose for us in suffering. The reason a Christian can rejoice in tribulation is because God has let us know something about it. That knowledge involves God working in us the pure gold of a tested Christian character. The beauty and quality of that gold depends on the refining action of the fire of suffering. Everyone admires people who are patient, experienced, enthusiastic and loving. However, they don't want the tribulations in their lives that will develop those traits. So God sends them anyway and says, "Trust Me. I know what I'm doing."



Job was the most righteous man on the face of the earth and yet he lost his wealth, his family and his health. His wife was so distraught that she said to him, "...Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh, What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:9-10). Later he told his friends, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." (Job 13:15). Job was totally in the dark as to why he was suffering, but he knew the character and power of God. He was willing to rest

in that. Here is where the victory can be won or lost in our lives. Are we going to demand explanations or rest in God Himself?

Discussion

Why do you think some people grow better through suffering while others grow bitter?

(Thoughts: They don't know Christ as Savior, unreal expectations of life, immature Christians, lack of knowledge of God and His ways, lack of faith, no guidance).

Comforting Others

Another reason God allows us to suffer is what Paul says to the Corinthian church: "The God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3b-4). Paul was under tremendous persecution for preaching Christ, and when he visited other Christians who were under persecution, he could comfort them with the same comfort that God had comforted him. One of the "big guns" that the Enemy uses against us is discouragement. So God is able to put us in contact with people who have been through the same trouble to encourage us. The principle can be applied to many other forms of suffering. Have you ever lost someone you loved? Have your parents divorced? Has anyone falsely accused you or lied about you? Have you trusted Christ to encourage and comfort you in your

pain? Take heart, for God will probably use you in the future to comfort someone else who is going through the same thing. Likewise, if you are now hurting, don't be too proud to seek out wise Christian people who will be able to help and guide you through it. Your parents, teachers or pastor will have a level of experience that you don't have yet.

Christ Manifest in Us

Yet another reason God allows suffering is that it becomes an opportunity to put Christ on display in your life. What this means is: When you are going through hard times, people tend to watch and wait to see how you react. Since they may know you are a Christian, they may be waiting to see if you cave in and abandon your faith. When you live in faith and trust God to bring you through, something wonderful happens. Christ begins to live His life through you (Phil. 1:20-21). Now it is no longer you, but Christ lives in you (Gal. 2:20). People may say, "I don't know how she does it. If I were in that situation, I would be angry and bitter." What they may not know is that if you were trusting in yourself, you would probably be angry and bitter too. Now, since you have handed the control of your life over to Christ, He has given you perfect peace, even though the pain is still there.

Here is where we need to be careful of our testimony before others. It is natural for people to think something like, "Joan is just naturally a strong person. I really admire her for the way she is handling it." Don't take the credit for what God is doing in your life. Make sure He

gets all the credit. This is what the Bible calls “glorifying God.” When people see you, it isn’t really the natural you but the new creation in Christ who is relying upon God’s power to fortify you. You might say, “This has been the worst time in my life, but I thank God that He has given me hope and strength through it all. Now I feel closer to Him than ever.” Saying a simple word will help them to see Christ in you.

The other side of the coin is that when they see Christ in you, some may not like what they see. We are living in a world that is hostile to Christ and His Kingdom. Those of the meaner sort may put you down as a religious fanatic. The Lord Jesus warned, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). It is enough to know that we are growing strong in our faith and that we are pleasing God.

ENERGIZE

Summary

When things go wrong, we naturally ask, “Why me? What happened to my guardian angel?” It can be something like failing a test at school or something as serious as losing a loved one. One answer is that we live in a fallen creation with sinful people, sickness, accidents, natural disasters and death. Through no fault of our own, we can find ourselves in a position of great loss. Sometimes, we must face the truth that we have no one to blame but ourselves. Sinful desires, poor judgment and bad decisions account for some of our most painful experiences. Finally, if you are a Christian, you may suffer for doing

or saying the right thing. This is called suffering for righteousness sake, or for the name of Christ. This is the sweetest suffering of all for we know it is pleasing to God.

Discussion

Young people sometimes shun other classmates who are sick or are hurting. Why? What are some ways we Christians can show them that we care?

(Thoughts: Send them a card, call them, send a text message, or be a Facebook friend to encourage them. Share a similar experience you have had, and how God has strengthened you. Pray for them and with them. Share what you have learned about suffering in this lesson. Invite them to church or Sunday school).

At certain times, we really don’t know why bad things happen, but then we remember that God does know, and that He has a beneficial purpose for it. It all comes down to trusting God. He never promises that we will know the “why” but wants us to be satisfied in knowing the “Who” in every circumstance. Knowing Him who holds the key is much better than knowing why. These trials are allowed by our loving God to build strong Christian character, develop valuable experience to comfort and encourage others, and to give us an opportunity to show others the life of Christ working in and through us.

Application

In this life, trouble will come. The question is, how will we handle it?

Will we fall apart and blame others, or will we see it as a spiritual opportunity for growth as a person and as a Christian? We know that, as a loving Father, God only wants what is best for us. The best can escape us, however, if we have the wrong attitude. The best place to begin is to thank God for His blessings, both physical and spiritual. We live in a free country with so many opportunities. We have been forgiven, sealed with the Spirit, and have a glorious expectation in Heaven. Now the issue is, how can we see this trial from God's perspective? We can look for opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bible reading and prayer are a great comfort in times like these. We can seek wise advice from those older and more experienced. In time, we also may be called upon to encourage others who will go through the same things we are experiencing. Whether we like it or not, we are an example for good or for evil. We can allow suffering to beat us down, or we can live by faith, knowing that God is willing to use us in the trial to sharpen us spiritually. Suffering brings a golden opportunity to surrender to the Lordship of Christ in our lives. When we do, the life of Christ shines through us, and He is glorified.

Gospel

The Cross of Christ is the supreme example of how God uses suffering for our good. At first glance the crucifixion of Christ looked like a tragedy. He was despised and rejected by men, humiliated, mocked and brutalized. Then three days later the disciples' sorrow turned

into joy. He rose from the dead and told of His victory. Paul received more revelation and became the herald of the Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles. Christ's suffering and death became the channel of eternal life to all who believe. He is waiting with open arms for any and all who want salvation.



Encouragement

Becoming a child of God brings us into a relationship with God in which no suffering is wasted. If you are saved by faith in Christ's shed blood, you have a wonderful potential for good that God wants to help you realize. Various forms of trouble can become the channel that He uses to help you help others. While others may choose to wallow in self-pity, we can choose to make the most of our suffering by helping those who are worse off than ourselves. If you have helped your parents, siblings and friends through tough times, you are well on your way to a rich reward. It is only the beginning. The best is yet to come.





By Pastor Ricky Kurth

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them...That their hearts might be comforted...unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding...” (Col. 2:1,2).

There is nothing worse than running low on assurance! During the gas shortage of the ‘70s, I was traveling from Illinois to Minnesota for a fishing trip with my father, when we began to run low on fuel. As we looked for a place to fill up, we were alarmed to find that one gas station after another had posted an “Out of Gas” sign. Suddenly all assurance that we wouldn’t find ourselves stranded along the Interstate was gone!

While the assurance that a full tank of gas can give is a comfortable thing, the assurance of *salvation* is infinitely and eternally better! No wonder the Apostle Paul was willing to endure “great conflict” for the saints to whom he ministered, that their hearts might be comforted by “the full assurance” that can be ours with a proper “understanding” of how simple faith saves us in the dispensation of grace (Col. 2:1,2).

But as we rightly divide the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15), we find that to obtain the assurance of salvation, God required more than just faith of the Hebrews. In Hebrews 10:22, for instance, we read:

“Let us draw near with a true heart *in full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Here we see that in a day when God required water baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21), Hebrews could not enjoy “full assurance of faith” unless their bodies were “washed

with pure water.” Of course! While men have always been saved by faith, when God required certain works as an expression of that faith, there could be no salvation without a performance of whatever work He required,¹ and no assurance apart from that expression of faith.

We see this again in I John 3:17-19:

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?...let us not love in word...but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we...shall assure our hearts before Him.”

Clearly, if John’s readers wanted to assure their hearts, they had to express their faith by sharing “this world’s good” (things like food and clothing) with fellow Hebrews in need of these things. Here it must be remembered that John wrote these words with the coming Great Tribulation in view.² After the Beast issues his mark, many Hebrews will find themselves unable to buy this world’s good without it (Rev. 13:17). Thus God has ordained that men seeking salvation in that day must express their faith by helping Hebrews in need (James 2:14-17 cf. Matt. 25:31-46). Under this arrangement, there can be no salvation without these works, and no assurance of salvation apart from these mandatory expressions of faith.




Nor could this brotherly benevolence be a one-time occurrence. Such charity will have to be *maintained* throughout the duration of the Tribulation, as we see in Hebrews 6:10,11:

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love...in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

The words “unto the end” here help us understand the meaning of verses like Matthew 24:13, where Hebrews were told, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” In a day when “the love of many shall wax cold” (v. 12), true believers will maintain their love for their brethren by continuing to supply them with this world’s goods all the way to the end of the Tribulation. Of course, this will become increasingly difficult as Daniel’s seventieth week wears on, especially since true believers will themselves be unable to buy food or clothing without taking the mark. No wonder these Hebrews are exhorted to “shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” There can be no assurance of salvation in that day without *continuing* in these necessary expressions of faith.

How then can believers *today* enjoy “the full assurance” Paul described in our text? Well, notice that Paul speaks of “the full assurance of understanding” (Col. 2:2). To attain the full assurance of salvation today, in the dispensation of grace, God does not ask us to *do* something, He asks us to *understand* something. And He doesn’t leave us guessing as to what it is we must understand, for Paul goes on to talk about “the acknowledgment of the mystery” (2:2). The only way to enjoy the full assurance of faith *today* is to acknowledge that the mystery has introduced an era in which works are no longer required as expressions of faith. There can be no assurance of salvation without an “understanding” and an “acknowledgment” of this dispensational change.

Many suspect that the gas shortage of the ‘70s was man-made, designed to drive up the price of gasoline. While we know nothing of this, we do know that if you are suffering from a shortage of assurance, it is a man-made shortage, caused by men (perhaps well-meaning men) who taught you God’s Word without rightly dividing it. But we trust that the “understanding” we have shared in this article will enable you to rejoice with us in “*all riches of the full assurance of understanding.*” 

Endnotes

1. Except when this was impossible, as with the thief on the cross.
2. The Hebrew epistles were written to 1st century Hebrews to instruct them as to how to be saved and enjoy the assurance of faith, even amid the terrors of the Tribulation. Had the dispensation of grace not interrupted God’s prophetic program, these people would have lived to see that terrible time. Even after the mystery was introduced, it was thought that the Rapture would take place quickly (as Paul’s use of the word “we” in I Thessalonians 4:15,17 indicates) and that the time of Jacob’s trouble would then come upon them.

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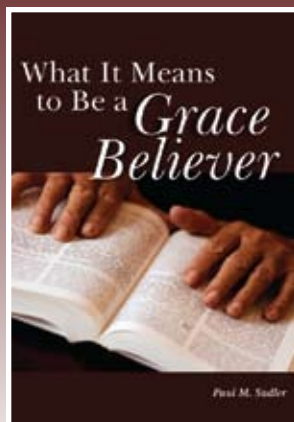
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Do You Worship at Your Church?

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

When a Christian lady asked us this question many years ago, we knew she was *really* asking if our church service was characterized by the kind of emotionalism that is found in so many churches. Her question prompted me to do a study of the word *worship* in Scripture, in an effort to obtain a *Biblical* definition of what constitutes genuine worship of Almighty God.

A Worshipful Life

Our study begins with God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his only son (Gen. 22:1-4), and Abraham's announcement that he planned to "worship" God in so doing (v. 5). The law of first reference suggests that the Bible's first use of the word *worship* here defines it as *a willingness to obey God no matter how one's faith is tested*, a good overall definition even today. And since Abraham indicated that "the lad" was also going to worship, the willingness of Isaac to give his life up at his father's behest¹ suggests that when we willingly offer our lives as living sacrifices at *our* Father's behest (Rom. 12:1), this too is an act of *worship*. We find confirmation of this when the Lord equated *worshipping* God with *serving* God in Matthew 4:10.

Years later, when Abraham sent his servant to his homeland to find a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24:1-11), his faithful servant prayed for God's help (vv. 12-14). When he received it (vv. 15-25), he "worshipped the Lord" by *thanking* Him (vv. 26,27), suggesting that each time we bow to thank God for answered prayer, we too are *worshipping* Him.

Many years later, the people of Israel "bowed their heads and worshipped" (Ex. 4:31) when they acknowledged that God was honoring His promise to visit and redeem them from Egyptian bondage (Gen.

15:13-16). This leads us to believe that it is a form of worship when we today acknowledge and thank God when He honors promises He has made *to us*, such as that found in Romans 8:28.

Next, the Bible calls it “worship” when the people of Israel brought “the firstfruits of the land” to God (Deut. 26:10). Thus we believe that God considers it worship *when we put God first in our lives*. We well remember the day we asked one of the men in our church to help us with some work on the building. This faithful man listed all of the things that he had to do that week, then paused, and said simply, “But the Lord comes first.” We believe he worshipped God that day, when he gave Him the firstfruits of his time and effort.

As we come to Judges 7, Gideon “worshipped” God for the assurance He gave him that his little band of 300 would defeat the Midianites (7:9-14). Similarly, when we thank God today for all the assurances we find *in God’s Word*, we believe God is thrilled with this kind of worship.

Then when we consider the patriarch Job, it takes our breath away to see how he “fell down upon the ground, *and worshipped*” after losing all of his children and possessions (Job 1:20). Here we see worship characterized as a firm resolve to maintain one’s spiritual “integrity” (2:9) in the face of even the most horrendous ordeals of life. Add to this how David is also said to have “worshipped” God in the aftermath of his heart-wrenching loss (II Sam. 12:18-20). The worship of God at times like these is a *powerful* testimony to the lost that we have something they do not possess.

Contributing financially to the Lord’s work is probably not commonly thought of as worship, but the worship of the wise men is said to have included presenting the Lord with their gifts (Mt. 2:11), suggesting that giving to the Lord’s work is an example of worship that is fit for a King.



We don’t always feel like worshipping God when a loved one is sick, and He does not extend to us the same “mercy” He granted Paul and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-27). But when the Lord refused mercy to the Syrophenician woman, she “worshipped” Him anyway (Mt. 15:21-25), and her faith and her understanding of why He was refusing to help her touched His heart (vv. 26-28). Surely God’s heart is still touched when we are able to worship Him at such difficult times, understanding that when He forbears to bestow such help, it is so that we will “rather” learn to rejoice in His all-sufficient grace, and the perfecting of His strength in our weakness (II Cor. 12:9).

If your heart *longs* to worship the Lord, but you find it difficult, remember that worship always comes much easier when you find

yourself in the place where God has “appointed,” just as the disciples did long ago (Mt. 28:16,17). Of course, in this dispensation, God has “appointed” that we suffer “afflictions” for the cause of Christ (I Thes. 3:3), but there is perhaps no time when our worship is more pleasing to God than when we worship Him in the face of such affliction.

A Worshipful Church Service

While we have looked at several ways to worship the Lord, we began by asking if *the church service* at a grace church is characterized by worship, and the answer to this is a resounding *yes!* To begin with, when Joshua is said to have worshipped the Lord, he asked, “*What saith my lord unto His servant?*” (Joshua 5:14). This worshipful attitude of *seeking the words of God* is the same mind-set we display every time we gather in a grace church to hear God’s Word taught, for it is only when the Word is *rightly divided* that we hear the Lord’s words to His servants *today*.

Then too, remember how the Lord said of the Pharisees, “in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:9)? Well, if teaching the commandments of *men* constitutes *vain* worship, then teaching the commandments of *God* must be considered *true* worship! And only grace churches are emphasizing the commandments of God *given to us through Paul* (I Cor. 14:37; I Thes. 4:2).


This does not mean, of course, that we throw away the law and the prophets, for even Paul himself professed that his “worship” included “believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). Here we see that we worship God when we go to church and simply believe His Word, His *entire* Word. Of course, it is only when we recognize dispensational differences and changes that we “worship God in the spirit” (Phil. 3:3).

And so if others have caused you to feel that you don’t *worship* at your grace church, we trust these thoughts from God’s Word have helped you to see that, as a grace believer, you worship God in ways that are far more pleasing to Him than those who attend services characterized by mere shallow emotionalism. We feel certain that if Jeremiah were to visit some of these churches, he would post a sign above the door that read: “Hear the word of the Lord, all ye...that enter in at these gates to worship” (Jer. 7:2). Hearing the word of the Lord is the *highest* form of worship, for when we recognize just who it is that is speaking to us through the Scriptures, we see that this too is a form of worship (cf. John 9:35-38).

A Worshipful Future

Finally, once we draw our last breath and enter His presence, we can look forward to worshipping the Lord in a very unique way. Consider how the people of Israel “worshipped” the Lord after they saw how He accepted their sacrifice (II Chron. 7:1-3). Then think of what a thrill

it will be when we stand someday at the Judgment Seat of Christ and see Him accept every sacrifice we have ever made for Him, and reward us accordingly. It will be our highest honor and deepest privilege to *worship Him* in that day.

In closing, we would be remiss in this brief study of Biblical worship if we did not call your attention to Isaiah 66:23,24, where we read that in the kingdom of heaven on earth, they will “worship” God by going forth on a regular basis, as God says, to “look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me.” The prophet speaks here of souls in Hell, where “their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” At the present time, of course, our hearts *break* at the thought of friends and loved ones suffering eternal torment. But once we reach the eternal state, our minds will be so much like His that we will *worship* Him by acknowledging that even this most severe of all His judgments is “true” and even “*righteous*” (cf. Ps. 19:9; Rev. 16:7; 19:2). What a burden this should lay on our hearts to reach these dear ones *now* with the wonderful gospel of the wonderful grace of God. 

Endnote

1. As a young man, Isaac could have easily overpowered or outrun his elderly father.

YOU DO NEED HIM

Pastor J. C. O'Hair



“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3,4).

A Person is our Savior and our salvation. A Person is our Life-giver and our life. A Person is our Redeemer and redemption. A Person is our righteousness and holiness. A Person is our peace and our hope. That Person is the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Man Christ Jesus,” the “one Mediator between God and men.” By His blood we have been brought nigh to God.

We need nothing more than Christ; nothing less will suffice or avail. To add any religion whatsoever to Christ Himself is to displease God. In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The believer is in Christ. The believer is accepted in Christ; complete in Christ; without condemnation in Christ; the righteousness of God in Christ. The believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Christ is the superlative need of the world. He is all that you need, but you do need Him. You must have Him, or be lost forever.



BBS Letter Excerpts

From our Inbox:

"Thank you so-o-o much for *Two Minutes with the Bible*. I check it out first when opening my email. What a pleasurable way to begin online every morning."

From South Carolina:

"Yes, keep the *Searchlight* coming. I have learned so much these past four years, after being in a sect for thirty years and never learned a thing...I'm a poor church mouse, but I hope this little gift will help."

From Florida:

"Within the past year, I have endured life-threatening illness...[and] a catastrophic personal event. Suffice it to say, every Christian value has been tested...I had read, cover to cover, the November '09 *Searchlight*. It helped tremendously during my time of woe. Thank you for this issue."

From North Carolina:

"I want to thank you Bereans for the *Searchlight*. I can't wait to get my copy every month. I used to pray, and still do, 'God I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' and over time, He showed it to me! Thank you Lord, and the Bereans."

From our Inbox:

"Often I wonder about you guys: good Bible teaching, but are they soft on sin? After listening to the Galatians Bible study, the answer is no. Fantastic!"

From Georgia:

"I have been a Southern Baptist pastor for twenty years. I recently came under 'grace' teaching, and it immediately answered a lot of questions that I had about doctrine and Biblical understanding...I am 42 years old, but when I began to rightly divide the Word, it made the Scriptures jump off the page in a new light and better understanding, and it almost makes me sound like a new Christian with my newfound enthusiasm for the Word." (It's like getting saved all over again, isn't it?—Ed).

From South Africa:

"Thank you for your faithful support to me through many years with the *Searchlight* and other wonderful sound material. I am ordering this publication to share with a friend that is a pastor in a charismatic church who is open to the gospel of the grace of God. Please help to pray that his eyes may be opened to see this glorious message rightly divided."

From Tennessee:

"Thank you so much for your books regarding the Word. I have learned so much. I was saved when I was young, and am now almost 75, and have always been taught the 'blenderized' version, but I thank God for you and Les Feldick for rightly dividing the Word. Please send the following books, as I have a young man with a beautiful family who is hungry for more than he is taught in Sunday School."

From Florida:

"This dear lady...is active in the Baptist church. I began talking about rightly dividing the Word, and the difference between Paul's gospel and Israel's gospel, and I learned that this sweet lady has *never* heard the gospel of the grace of God in the 75 years that she has been here! She actually gave me her address so that I could give it to you. She is *very* excited about the grace gospel, and cannot wait to begin receiving the *Searchlight!*" (75 years is long enough to wait to hear the truth!—Ed.)

From Pennsylvania:

"*Biblical Fasting* presented to us one more exposure of the false teachings we were participating in while connected to the three charismatic churches in our area. Pretty much everything the author spoke of we saw and entered into in one form or another. It is once again good to sort out more of the truth."

From Florida:

"I researched tithing on your web site last night for my son. Thank you for always being available with sound doctrine."

From Pennsylvania:

"It hardly seems possible that just last week about this time we were finishing up the Bible conference in Duncansville...probably that is the first time we have heard anyone teaching on Philemon...your closing words on Sunday night sent me 'blubbering' and dashing for my Kleenex."

From Georgia:

"I love reading and studying the Word of God, and Pastors Stam and Sadler give a lot of insight."

From Australia:

"The June edition of the *Searchlight*...is without doubt one of the best editions I have read to date... *The Measure of the Ministry*...I found most insightful and challenging. I was also very encouraged by *Paul's Prayer Pattern*. What an excellent review of how we should pray. The icing on the cake was Pastor Stam's *Moses and Paul*..."

From South Africa:

"I have found some of the writings of Paul M. Sadler to be of great help...We also use a lot of C. R. Stam's books as research material for our assignments. I actually am currently reading Stam's commentaries on *Acts*, and am finding it very helpful to understanding how the mystery was revealed, and where the church actually began."

From California:

"Hey, I discovered your audio sermons. I listened to the first one on Colossians a couple of days ago. Fantastic stuff!" (We hope to post a series on Philemon soon.—Ed).

From our Inbox:

"Thank you for the explanation on water baptism. It's the best I ever heard, and I am now convinced that water baptism is not for us."

From Michigan:

"Over the years, so many folks have come to church for awhile, but then when they start hearing Paul's message, they leave us. Therefore, we are in a big building with a small congregation. But I would rather be in a grace church with ten, than in a church with a thousand that does not teach the truth."



"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

Question Box

“I personally believe the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a literal account. In Luke 16, verses 19-21, why did Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, emphasize these particular characteristics about the rich man and Lazarus? Is there a reason?”

While some believe the account is a parable we concur with your conclusion that the story is literal. And there is indeed a reason why Luke highlighted certain things about the two main characters in the story.

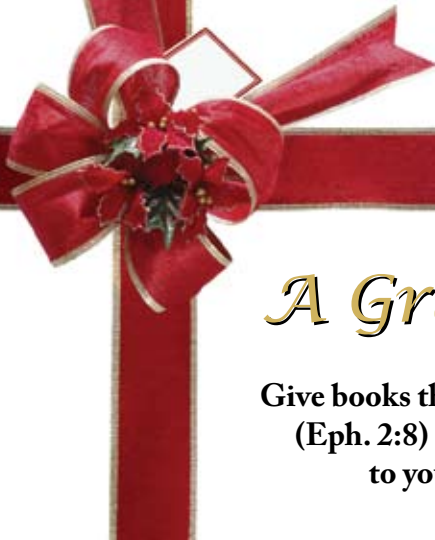
In context, we know the rich man was a Pharisee (v. 14) who had *no regard* whatsoever for the Law. The Law says, “Thou shalt not covet,” but the rich man wanted all this world had to offer. Notice he was “clothed in purple and fine linen.” Purple was the color of the rich and famous in those days. The fact that the rich man attired himself in purple garments shows his innermost desire for all to see that he was wealthy. He even made sure his circle of friends knew his under garments of fine linen were spun on the looms of the gods in Egypt, where this type of clothing is said to have originated.

Also, it should be noted that he “fared sumptuously every day.” In other words, he didn’t observe the Sabbath, nor did he allow his servants, who prepared these feasts, to observe it. Since the rich man did not respond to God in faith, we can safely conclude he was unsaved, as the narrative clearly goes on to indicate. This does not mean those who are wealthy cannot be saved, but they must first respond to God in faith, which the rich man failed to do.

Lazarus is said to have been a beggar, “which was laid at his [the rich man’s] gate, full of sores.” If you walk by skid row every day, before long you will begin to insulate yourself to the cries of the poor and indigent. The same was true of Lazarus; he laid at the gate of the rich man *unnoticed* by him and the others who came to dine with him. Interestingly, the dogs who came to lick his sores had more *compassion* on Lazarus than the rich man who had a responsibility, according to the law, to help him. Apparently the servants brought Lazarus the leftovers that were swept up from under the rich man’s table.

Even though Lazarus was the poorest of the poor, he nevertheless had responded to God in faith. As the Scriptures unequivocally teach, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

—Pastor Sadler



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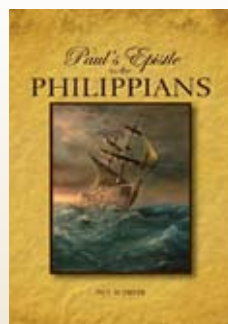
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and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High”
(Psalm 92:1).

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