

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

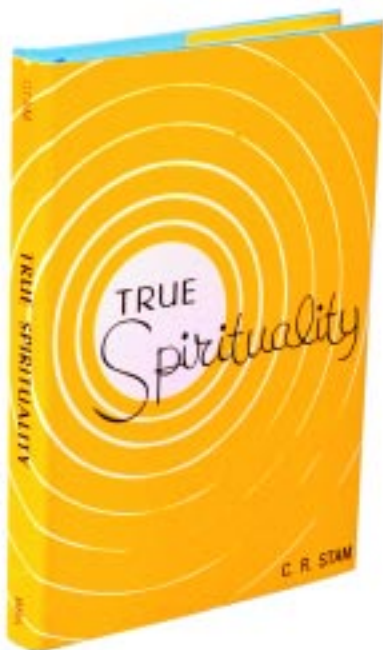
January 2000



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN LIVING

True Spirituality

By C. R. Stam



The Apostle Paul was always careful to strike a *balance* between the doctrines of Grace and the believer's walk. Since we desire to follow his example, we are offering this outstanding volume that coincides with this theme.

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From the Editor to You	4
The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter	7
Question Box	12
The Fear of God	13
A Touching Letter	18
Sanctification	19
Is Berean Bible Institute For You?	22
Winter Bible Conference	22
A New Commentary for the New Millennium	23
News and Announcements	24

The *Berean Bible Society* is an organization for the promotion of Bible study by means of newspaper series, recorded Bible lessons, and the distribution of Bible study literature. It is a non-profit organization, a work of faith supported by the gifts of Christian friends.

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Editor: Paul M. Sadler

Composition and Layout: Kevin J. Sadler

Printing: Lithocolor, Westchester, IL

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

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

Internet: <www.bereanbiblesociety.org>

E-mail: <berean@execpc.com>

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

We have had a number of people inquire over the past several months if we plan to reinstate our *Bible Time* broadcast any time soon. These are brethren who heard the message of Grace by way of our program years ago and would like to see others have the same opportunity to hear Paul's gospel via the radio.

While radio will always have its niche, it doesn't have the corner on the marketplace that it once did. We are grateful, of course, that the gospel continues to go forth over the air but the sad reality is that very few listen to the radio these

days, with the exception of those who drive to and from work. Furthermore, between Talk Radio and the mainline denominations buying up time slots, it greatly limits exposure during peak listening hours.

Pastor Stam felt the major problem with radio was, you have to be in the right place at the right time. Consequently, he was a firm believer in the printed page, due to its versatility. After nearly sixty years of proclaiming the riches of God's grace, the *Berean Searchlight* and our literature continue to reach thousands for Christ. We are also happy to report that our conference ministry runs a close second in response. This doesn't mean, however, there isn't room for other avenues to reach the confused masses with the gospel of the grace of God.

Although our Board of Directors hasn't ruled out airing *Bible Time* over the radio in the future, they feel that at this juncture our resources would be better utilized by airing the program over the Internet. If you were to survey one hundred business people as to which lane of the information highway they are traveling down, probably seventy-five percent would say the Internet. In addition to being worldwide, people can tune into *Bible Time* at their convenience any time day or night. These are digital/audio recordings by Pastor Stam and your Editor that can be listened to on-line or downloaded onto your hard drive to be enjoyed at a later time.

Bible Time can be now heard via the Internet at our website: <www.bereanbiblesociety.org>. Simply click on *Bible Time*, and download the free Real Audio Player. Lord willing, we plan to air new programs monthly, so be sure to visit the site regularly. And don't forget to tell a friend!

Paul M. Sadler
President

From Australia:

"We are grateful for the ministry we have enjoyed over the past several years. Your insights into God's Word are always welcome each month. Our prayers are with you always with thanksgiving to our Lord for your faithful stand for the glorious gospel of His grace."

From Virginia:

"Since I was introduced to the ministry of *Berean Bible Society*, God has taught me much through studying the Word of God according to the truth of the gospel of the grace of God. Thank you for the good work you each are doing in the distribution of the resources God entrusts to you. Please be careful to guard the integrity of the stewardship of your ministry because as you continue to grow in the sheer volume of outreach conducted, it may become tempting to interpret success in the wrong way. Let God keep you humble, accountable to each other according to godliness and continually filled with the Spirit." (Thanks so very much for your godly counsel. We are firm believers that there must always be accountability in the Lord's work. Even, Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, was accountable to the church at Antioch which sent him forth on his first apostolic journey—Acts 13:1-3 cf. 14:26-28. Ed.)

From Colorado:

"Since we came to rejoice in the Grace message given to the Apostle Paul to make known Christ's unsearchable riches, our family has not taken part in a local Grace church due to the lengthy drive that separated us. We enjoyed home Bible studies with the emphasis on rightly dividing God's Word with many helps such as the *Berean Searchlight*, Pastor Stam and Sadler's books, and audio tapes. What a resource *Berean Bible Society* has been to us! Our gifts have been directed to great ministries such as *BBS* and *BBI* who stand for the Mystery. Thank you for your ministry."

From Massachusetts:

"Thanks for your faithfulness in proclaiming God's Word, rightly divided. For acknowledging that Paul's gospel is distinct, for it is the revelation of a Mystery, kept hidden in ages past. How else can you reconcile seemingly contradictory Scripture, unless you realize that God set aside the one and brought about the other "*until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in...*" (Rom. 11:25). May God continue to empower you and give you great success as you do His will and prepare His people for works of service."

From Illinois:

"Just a note to thank you for mailing the *Searchlight* to me each month. I enjoy it so much. I wish this could be more."

From Internet:

"Here I am, send me...." But teach me first to know and understand the entire Bible in light of Paul's gospel. This is all new to me and I am truly *hooked* on studying the Scriptures from the Grace dispensational viewpoint. I was proud of what I did know and understand about the Bible but God humbled and blessed me when he led me to Mr. Stam's books. Now I can't put them down. My Bible in one hand and Stam's teachings and insights in the other. But, I need structured direction in my studies to make a complete and woven understanding of how it all fits together from beginning to GLORY. So where from here?????" (This can be accomplished in a number of ways. We'll be happy to put you in touch with a local Grace church or provide you with tapes from our *Tape Lending Library*, if there isn't an assembly in your area. You may also want to consider attending the *Berean Bible Institute*. Looking forward to hearing from you! Ed.)

From Washington:

"The October *Searchlight* was especially wonderful. God richly bless the entire Society."

From Ohio:

“I am studying the books on Corinthians. They are so helpful. Thank you for making them available. I receive the *Berean Searchlight* and read it from cover to cover. I thank God and each of you there for your faithfulness.”

From Florida via the Internet:

“Thank you so much for the *Berean Searchlight* and the other literature you sent me! The Bible makes so much sense now! I am very interested in joining you. Please send any information on membership and an application, please. You are doing fantastic work. God bless you mightily! (No membership is required, beloved. The important thing is that you’re a member of the Body of Christ. Ed.)

From Pennsylvania:

“Enclosed is \$... for your wonderful work you do. I really do enjoy your *Searchlight*. I am waiting for the Commentary on Ephesians.”

From Ghana, West Africa:

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to you for the good work that you are doing. We graduated from the Bible School in the latter part of last year. I am now at my station and I have received all of the literature that you have sent this year. Your literature has been a help to me since the very first time you posted one to me. I was just married about two months ago and the edition, *Institution of Marriage* that I read has been a great help to me. May God richly bless you and all the people that make it possible for this work to be in progress.”

From Washington D.C.:

“I would like a copy of your book *Things That Differ*. I’m just getting to the full knowledge of God and I am delighted. God Speed! Peace and love to you all.”

From Wisconsin:

“Thank you for the *Berean Searchlight*, a wonderful supplemental learning tool as we study the Scriptures. I’ve been sharing with my adult son. He was especially interested in your series on *The Supernatural Sign Gifts* which began with the January ’99 issue. I seem to be missing the April and May issues. Could you kindly send me another issue for those two months? (Lord willing, we hope to place these messages into booklet form later this year. Ed.)

From Illinois:

“Brothers and sisters, may God bless you to experience even more grace and peace as you continue your precious work. Thank you very much for printing some of the most valuable Bible instruction I’ve ever encountered. Thank you for making it so affordable. Thank you for shipping it so quickly. I suppose it is because you bear in mind that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Certainly yours is a life saving work and if I ever need emergency medical supplies, I hope they will be shipped by an organization as careful as the *Berean Bible Society*. I’m enjoying and learning a great deal from Pastor Stam’s *ACTS Dispensationally Considered* and the other valuable materials you enclosed. Thank you.”

From Wisconsin:

“Many years ago, my dear friend sent my name in to receive the *Berean Searchlight*. I am so thankful she did, I receive a blessing every time I read it. There is not much I disagree with as I read your teachings. I truly believe you are *rightly dividing the Word of God*. May our Lord bless you for being so faithful in sending me the booklet all these years even though I must confess I have not helped financially. God bless all of you as you continue in *His* work.”

“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

The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter

By Paul M. Sadler

As we know, there is very little written on what is commonly called the General Epistles from the standpoint of the Word, rightly divided. This is somewhat understandable insofar as most of our grace authors have spent the lion's share of their time addressing Pauline themes. Of course, this has been by design since the commands of Christ for the Church today are found solely in Paul's epistles. While there will always be room to further our understanding of the Mystery, perhaps the time has come to consider the writings of Peter in light of the Pauline revelation.

The neglect of this subject over the years has generated numerous questions which deserve our prayerful consideration. For example, since Peter knew about Paul's gospel, did he preach it to his hearers? Are the letters of Peter on equal footing with Paul's epistles? In other words, do Peter's writings contain Body truth? If those living during the dispensation of Promise were incorporated into the dispensation of the Law, then, did those who were "in Christ" before Paul become members of the Body of Christ at the beginning of this present dispensation? Did the twelve apostles of the kingdom become members of the Body of Christ? Etc., etc.

A LOWLY FISHERMAN

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." —I Peter 1:1

The epistle opens by introducing us to a man named Peter. Although religion has placed him on a pedestal, Peter never thought so highly of himself. In fact, when Cornelius fell down at his feet to worship him, "Peter took him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:25,26).

If we were to rank the social status of Peter according to our present system he would probably be living at the poverty level. He had little education, which meant that he was held in low esteem in the eyes of men. The Galileans in those days were a simple people who were somewhat impulsive, which helps to explain Peter's actions at times. Those who lived along the shores of the Sea of Galilee were primarily fishermen by trade. Thus, when the Lord called Peter, and Andrew his brother, He found them casting a net into the sea hoping to snare some fish.

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him" (Matt. 4:18-20).

Notice that the Master "saw two brethren." This strongly implies they already knew the Lord. Thus, this call was to discipleship. Hence, "follow me, and *I will make you* fishers of men." The Potter is about to place the clay onto the potter's wheel that He might fashion it according to His

will. Throughout the molding process, the life of Peter is a study of contrasts, especially in the early stages of his spiritual development. Perhaps the most suitable word that sums up the character of Peter is, *impetuous*. While we admire his willingness to serve the Lord, he always seemed to be in a dilemma!

Who, but Peter, would ask the Master if he too might walk upon the sea in the midst of a raging storm. After he climbed out of the boat he realized that mere mortals don't walk on water, although he had already taken a few steps. As Peter was about to go under, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me" (Matt. 14:22-33). The lesson here for believers is this, when we take our eyes off the Lord and begin to dwell on our circumstances, we usually find ourselves sinking into the depths of despair.

On another occasion, Peter, if you can imagine it, "*rebuked* the Lord" for stating how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed. "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (Matt. 16:21,22 cf. John 13:36-38). One thing you could count on with Peter, he always spoke his mind. But sometimes the best intentions fall prey to weakness when we act in our own strength.

Peter lived to have his own words betray him when a lowly servant girl perceived, "this fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.... Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, *I know not the man.*" Before the evening ended Peter had denied the Lord three times.

It has been said, "The noblest and purest of men are often tempted by evil thoughts and perplexing doubts." But Peter refused to wallow in the quagmire of failure. To his credit he repented of his wayward actions and continued in the faith. He did, however, learn a valuable lesson, never to place confidence in the flesh.

Years later as the clay was shaped into a vessel of honor, the religious leaders in Israel took note that Peter and the other disciples had been with the Lord. They marveled that these *unlearned* and *ignorant* men spoke with such authority and boldness (Acts 4:13). Higher education isn't necessarily a prerequisite to be used of the Lord. In fact, very few of the inspired writers of Scripture were educated men by ancient standards, yet they produced a Book that has left an indelible impression upon the world.¹ You see, God has chosen the "nots" "to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Cor. 1:28,29). God can and will use you in His service no matter what your educational background may be. A *willing* heart is all that is required.

PETER'S APOSTLESHIP

"And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James

the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him” (Matt. 10:1-4).

We should note here the Holy Spirit’s shift in emphasis from “twelve disciples” to “twelve apostles.” A disciple is a *follower*, one who is learning the elementary things of God’s Word. In this case, the Lord was teaching them the first principles of the kingdom. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul never refers to the members of the Body of Christ as disciples in any of his epistles, and for good reason. We are the college graduates, as it were, who have at our disposal a knowledge of both programs of God. Therefore, we are given titles that have to do with *authority*, such as ambassadors and stewards.

On the other hand, “apostle” has the idea of a sent one. Once the disciples were schooled in the basics of the kingdom message, they were commissioned to proclaim Christ as the Messiah of Israel, the rightful heir to the throne of David. The number 12, the number of governmental authority, is woven throughout the Prophetic Program. Thus, there were 12 Apostles of the kingdom who will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Although the listings of the twelve vary somewhat, there is one constant: Peter is always placed first on the list, while Judas is always mentioned last. But why Peter? Perhaps we should also ask, why Moses or why Paul? Simple! They were divinely *appointed* to fulfill that which God had called them to. Those who

questioned the instructions of these divinely chosen vessels questioned God Himself, for they were His spokesmen.

In the case of Peter, he was the head of the twelve, which again shows leadership within the leadership structure. It was Peter who stood up in the midst of the apostles regarding the office left vacant by Judas and said, “Men and brethren....” It was Peter who lifted up his voice on the day of Pentecost and said, “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words....” It was Peter who rose up at the Jerusalem Council after much disputing and said, “Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us....” He was the one who confirmed Paul’s apostleship among the Gentiles.

It has been suggested that the twelve apostles should be grouped, humanly speaking, in the following manner: Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother were born *leaders*. Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew were born *doubters*. While James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas were all born *workers*.

PETER’S CONFESSION

Perhaps the main reason Peter emerged as the head among the apostles was due to his confession. Upon arriving at Caesarea Philippi our Lord asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?” Since they were still somewhat uncertain themselves at this point, they shared what they had been hearing via the

grapevine. Some say you're John the Baptist who has returned from the dead. Others seem to think you're Elijah who is to precede the coming of the Messiah. We've also heard that you are Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" It was Peter who stepped front and center and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). "Thou art the Christ," that is, (Gr. *Christos*), the *anointed*—the Old Testament (Heb. *Mashiyach*) *Messiah*. Peter's confession is a clear indication that God's hand of blessing was upon him.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17,18).

The eighth day after Peter was born his earthly father (Jona) named him Simon, which means *hearing*. He was as unstable as water, but divine grace was about to make a profound change in his life. Thus, he receives a "given name" from our Lord who was well pleased with his declaration. "Thou art Peter" (Gr. *Petros*) a *little rock*. He was to become a rock, sure and steadfast, that could be relied upon to hold fast to the truth through the coming storms.

We also have a fascinating Greek play upon words in this portion. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [Gr. *Petros*], and upon this rock [Gr. *Petra*] I will build my church; and the gates of

hell shall not prevail against it." Our Lord did not say that He was going to build His Church upon Peter (*Petros*) as Catholicism teaches. They believe Peter was the first Pope, a claim that is *unsubstantiated* by Church history and (more importantly) the Scriptures.

Rather, it would be built upon the special revelation that Peter received from the Father, namely, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" "Upon this rock [Gr. *Petra*, a massive rock] I will build my church." In other words, the church would be built upon *Christ*. He was to be its *foundation* upon which the living stones will rest (I Peter 2:1-8). If we consistently rightly divide the Word of truth, the called out ones in this passage would be the kingdom church. Therefore, it is the kingdom saints who have received their Messiah that will be added to this foundation—the first of which was the little flock that included the twelve apostles (Luke 12:32).

So then, believing Israel is the New Testament church. Contrary to tradition, we are not the New Testament church; we are the Church, the Body of Christ. Both the Old and New Covenants were made with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Jer. 31:31,32). However, the Apostle Paul is clear that we are partakers of Israel's spiritual things; consequently, we are the beneficiaries of the spiritual blessings of the New Testament by grace, and grace alone. Those who claim otherwise must crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame, since the blood of Christ was shed once for all in

accordance with the New Testament (Rom 15:27 cf. Heb. 9:11-15).

The Lord assures Peter and the others here in Matthew 16 that nothing could deter Him from fulfilling His promise. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [Gr. *hades*] shall not prevail against it." Every language has words that are not found in other languages. Since we do not have an English word for the Greek term *hades*, the translators chose to use the word "hell." Here it must be remembered that *hades* is *not* the literal hell of the Bible.

The Greek *Gehenna* or hell is a completely *different* realm than that of *hades*. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell [Gr. *Gehenna*], into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:43). Hell was originally created for the devil and his angels, and insofar as man has followed Satan in his rebellion against God all unbelievers will also be sentenced to the blackness of darkness forever. Presently *unoccupied*, hell is located in outer darkness (Matt 8:12; 25:41 cf. Rev. 20:10-15; 21:8).

On the other hand, *hades* or the unseen world is located in the center of the earth. Prior to the Cross it was a repository for the departed spirits of the dead. The believers were located in paradise, called Abraham's bosom, which was separated from the unbelievers by a great gulf. Today, only the unsaved reside in *hades*, awaiting the judgment to come (Ps. 63:9; 139:8; Matt. 11:23; Luke 16:19-31; Eph. 4:9).

Inasmuch as *hades* was so closely associated with death, they are

often spoken of together. Before the coming of Christ, death and *hades* reigned supreme. They conquered so methodically, so completely, that it appeared hopeless to ever be delivered from their grasp. Thus, the Lord consoled His disciples that not even the "gates of *hades*" could hinder His purpose to establish the kingdom church.

In the Old Testament the gates of the city were the place where the elders gave counsel and the judges pronounced judgment. It was a place of *authority*. Consequently, death and *hades*, and he who possessed the power over both, Satan, could not overthrow the plans and purposes of God. Christ conquered death, triumphing over it when He rose again the third day. The gates of *hades* could not prevail against Him (the Rock). He threw open the gates, delivering all those who lived in fear of death into the glorious presence of the Father, where they await the return of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom.

With the finished work now accomplished, the Scriptures record these words of the judge of all the earth: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [*hades*] and of death" (Rev. 1:18). He who holds the key in His hand, holds the authority over the domain. According to this passage Christ has supremacy over death and *hades*. Sinner friend, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He died for your sins and rose again, or you will one day find yourself in *hades* with no hope of reprieve. Woe unto those who die without Christ, for they will be carried away to the unseen

world which is destined to be emptied into the lake of fire.

Although the twelve didn't fully comprehend all that had been spoken at the time, the Lord knew in His sovereignty that the victory was near at hand. Therefore, He turns to Peter and says: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Notice "I will give unto *thee*," that is, Peter. Peter, as well as the other apostles, is given the power to act on the

Messiah's behalf regarding matters of the kingdom. He has the authority to bind or loose, which as we shall see is significant.

To Be Continued!



Endnote

1. The divine work of inspiration passed through each writer's very *thought* process (including those who spoke it orally). It miraculously filtered through their different styles of writing, vocabulary, vocations, experiences, moods, and sufferings. Yet we can safely say that the 66 Books of the Bible are the inspired Word of God in their original writings. As Pastor Stam has always said: "The truth is that the Bible is *wholly* the Word of God, yet at the same time, wholly the word of man...."

QUESTION BOX

"In the October Searchlight you used the word 'resuscitated' and applied it to Lazarus and the widow's son. I have been taught that these two are said to have been resurrected. You contrasted their situation with the Lord of whom you indicate that He was 'resurrected.' It seems to me that you have used the word 'resuscitated' and contrasted it with 'resurrection' such that one could only conclude that these two did not die. Could you please clarify the matter?"

Your point, beloved, does have some merit. Interestingly, some years ago when we stated that Lazarus was resurrected from the dead a number of brethren wrote to caution us that technically this was not the case. They, too, have a point insofar as neither the widow's son nor Lazarus were resurrected in the same sense as our Lord. Neither one was raised *incorruptible*, never to experience death again. Nor can it be said that they have been partakers of the resurrection to everlasting life, which in their case won't occur until the first resurrection at the close of the Great Tribulation.

We do concur that both the widow's son and Lazarus were indeed dead for a short period of time. Since they were not raised according to the promise of Scripture, we were merely attempting to differentiate between the reinstatement of human life and the promise of resurrected life. Perhaps it would be better to use the phrase, "the restoration of human life" or "reversal of death," for the sake of clarification.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer in his classic work on *Systematic Theology* states: "Every *so-called* resurrection which the Sacred Text chronicles was but a *restoration*. The one who died was returned to the same sphere of existence which he occupied before, and, eventually, he died again. There is *no* parallel in these incidents with the resurrection of Christ" (emphasis ours).
—Pastor Sadler

Although the article below was written by Pastor Stam in 1949, the truth contained herein is timeless. —Ed.

The Fear of God

By Cornelius R. Stam

Should members of the Body of Christ in this dispensation of Grace experience fear? Does not perfect love cast out fear?

First, let it be noted that it was John, the apostle of the circumcision, and not Paul, who said, "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" (I John 4:18). This passage, therefore, affords little support for the argument that believers in *this dispensation of Grace* should know nothing of fear. But, furthermore, it was not even *the fear of God* that John had in mind when he wrote this passage. It was fear of persecution and suffering.

In the will of God the circumcision epistles were written especially for believers of a future day; those who will live in the time of judgment which will follow this period of grace, when the vials of God's wrath will be poured out upon this Christ-rejecting world. Hence these epistles contain the information they do about the Antichrist, the tribulation, the "sin unto death," etc.

It is during this time of upheaval and judgment, when Antichrist holds sway, when the worship of God and His Christ will be made so difficult, that perfect love will give boldness and cast out fear. Let us, in our minds, put ourselves in the places of these persecuted saints of the coming tribulation and see how beautifully this passage will fit their case:

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:16-18).

The lesson here is also applicable to us, for in the measure that we dwell in love the fear of present trials and of coming judgment will be cast out.

But surely this passage does *not* teach that love will cast out all sense of fearing *God*, or of standing in awe of Him.

Indeed, Peter, another apostle of the circumcision, writing under the Spirit's guidance for the same period of time, teaches a lesson which we also do well to learn. He says:

"And if ye call on the Father [Lit. "call on Him as Father"], who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, *pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:17-19).

It is indeed a stupendous thought that a holy God who, offended by sin, will judge without respect of persons, pouring out His wrath and casting into hell, has *saved me*—paying for my sins with *the blood of His Son!* To think what I have escaped, and how! To think that I may address the One who will judge sinners in His wrath, as *Father!* What emotions this should awaken in my heart! Minged emotions of love and joy and gratitude on the one hand, and of fear and trembling on the other, as one who has been delivered from fearful destruction by God Himself at infinite cost.

Believers whose fear of God goes no deeper than an honorable respect have little conception of the infinite love that moved *Him* to save *them*. They understand little of the Cross. They know little of His grace.

Such might well be asked:

“Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? O, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?”

The fear to which the Scriptures exhort us, then, is not the fear of an ill-treated slave or of a guilty criminal. It is not fear of persecution or suffering or even of punishment for sin. It is exactly what the term “fear of *God*” implies. It is the result of a deep appreciation of our own nothingness and of the infinite greatness and majesty of God. It stands opposed to pride and self-confidence. With it goes a natural fear to disobey or displease Him. This fear is not incompatible with grace.

We dare say that if the President of the United States should graciously invite one of our readers to dine with him at the White House, that reader would prepare for the visit with fear and trembling. And this is a democracy! Our reader’s fear would not spring from any concern over what the President might *do* to him. It would spring rather from an appropriate realization of the importance of the presidency, if not of the President himself. Nor would it be at all becoming if the reader, thus invited, were to become too familiar with the President and treat him as a “pal.” The fact that the President had invited the reader to dinner would be no excuse for his forgetting the dignity of the President’s position.

Is it strange then that we should be so often reminded in Scripture that the fear of God should characterize our attitude and behavior? True, our Lord deigned to call His disciples “*my friends*,” but this does not make it proper for us to speak of Him as “Friend Jesus.” We also read in Hebrews 2:11 that “*He is not ashamed to call them brethren*,” but this does not make it proper for us to speak of Him as “Brother Jesus” as some have done. In this dispensation of His grace, indeed He has given us a position at His own right hand as full grown sons, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ. But this does not mean that we should forget or ignore our own unworthiness, or who it is that has bestowed these undeserved blessings upon us. Our relationship to God will prove all the more sacred when these

facts are borne in mind, but once let us forget them and we will have nothing more than a theological dogma left, with all the sacredness and blessedness gone. Forget them and grace itself will have lost its meaning.

Missing the true, wonderful meaning of grace, many in our day have become intimate with God in the sense that they seem to feel they are His equals. They use His name and His Word in a frivolous manner; there is little reverence or humility in their study of the Scripture or in their prayer life. Little wonder they live the lives they do. There is no sacredness in such intimacy with God, nor is it the kind of intimacy He invites us to, nor is it even the kind of intimacy that will bring true joy and blessing to our lives.

The fear of God has always been coupled with true devotion and consecration to His Holy name. It has always tended toward godly living.

When Ananias and Sapphira would have broken down the divine order for their day they were stricken dead and *"great fear came upon all the church"* (Acts 5:11). The result was that *"believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women"* (Acts 5:14).

In Acts 9:31 we read that the churches of Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, *"walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."*

In Acts 10:2 we read that Cornelius was *"a devout man"* and *"one that feared God with all his house."*

Many such passages could also be cited from Paul's epistles, but we leave these for the remainder of our article.

PAUL AND THE FEAR OF GOD

Some who are lacking in this godly fear will argue that we have no right to draw these conclusions from passages in the gospels, the Acts and the circumcision epistles. We reply that this great lesson has been equally important in all dispensations. In all dispensations has it been fitting for finite men to stand in awe before an infinite God. In no dispensation has any other attitude been proper.

But as a matter of fact Paul, the great apostle of grace, has more to say about the

fear of God than any other New Testament writer.

We remind our readers that it is he who says of the wicked: *"There is no fear of God before their eyes"* (Rom. 3:18). Can it be then that he would at the same time teach believers that *they* need have no fear of God before their eyes? True, he exhorts us to love and adore God for His grace, to trust Him and come with confidence into His presence, to accept and occupy our position in Christ and to walk as sons of God. But it does not follow that this exalted position gives us

“...Paul, the great apostle of grace, has more to say about the fear of God than any other New Testament writer.”

reason to walk in pride and self-confidence, for this position is not ours by inherent right or personal merit, but *by grace*. Hence the apostle exhorts us to,

“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

“With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:1,2).

True, Paul, by the Spirit, explains that we should not have the fear of a slave or the fear that after all our sins might yet be held against us, but it is a great blunder to ignore what he *does* say about the place of fear in the Christian life or to suppose that in this dispensation of Grace there is no place at all for fear among believers.

It is Paul who, in Romans 11:20, exhorts us, ***“BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, BUT FEAR.”*** It is Paul who, in Philippians 2:12, bids us, ***“Work out your own salvation with FEAR AND TREMBLING.”*** It is Paul who, in Ephesians 5:21, beseeches us, ***“Submit yourselves one to another in the FEAR OF GOD.”*** It is he who, in Colossians 3:22, exhorts servants to serve their masters ***“in singleness of heart, FEARING GOD.”***

The sad lack of discipline in the Church today is often defended on the ground that this is the dispensation of Grace and we must deal graciously with each other. Thus men of God frequently evade their plain responsibility and invite confusion and disorder in their midst. Yet it is Paul, the apostle of grace, who writes to Pastor Timothy:

“Them that [practice] sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (I Tim. 5:20).

To the Corinthians, whom Paul himself had had to rebuke for their laxity, the apostle writes,

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor. 7:1).

And commending them for the spirit in which they had taken his rebuke, he says,

“...what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (II Cor. 7:11).

It is concerning our appearance before “the judgment seat of Christ,” that the apostle again uses this word *phobos*. This time it is translated *terror*.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Cor. 5:11).

The “judgment seat of Christ,” of course, is not to be confused with the Great White Throne where the lost will be judged for their sins. Our sins have already been judged at Calvary and we are assured that ***“There is therefore now no condemnation [judgment] to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).***

But entirely apart from salvation there will come a time when believers will be rewarded for *service* accomplished. This will take place at the “*bema*” or *judgment seat* of Christ. This “*bema*” was taken from the competitive games at which the judges decided to whom the prizes should go, and is not necessarily associated with legal justice. This is clear from I Corinthians 3:12-15 where, bidding

“...even the most unfaithful saint will still be saved, for salvation is wholly by the grace of God.”

us to take care how we build upon the foundation he has laid, the apostle says,

“Now if any man *build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

“Every man’s *work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.*

“If any man’s *work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

“If any man’s *work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*”

Thus we have the promise that even the most unfaithful saint will still be saved, for salvation is wholly by the grace of God. But it will be a shameful and bitter experience for any child of God in that day to have to suffer loss while others gain rewards; to see his works go up in flames, as it were, while he himself is saved only as by fire; to have to stand disgraced and empty-handed before the One who gave His life’s blood to save him; to be told that he has done no *real* service to his fellowmen.

And mark well, this particular passage does not deal with those who do not work at all for God, but with those whose work cannot be approved, *who do not build aright upon the foundation laid by Paul.*

If this were taken to heart by men of God today they would not

so soon sell the truth for a pulpit or human applause or freedom from a bit of persecution. If this were taken to heart they would have *one great passion: to know the truth and to make it known faithfully.*

In the light of the passage above, how important it is that we obey the injunction:


“*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).

This is why the apostle, by inspiration, warns,

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

“*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...*” (II Cor. 5:10,11).

May God awaken us to the reality of these things! May we see the *danger* of indulging in the pleasures of the world and of the flesh, of living for self, of neglecting the things of God. May many, even among our readers, reconsecrate themselves to the service of Christ in view of the day when we shall stand before Him to give an account.

The fear of God is not incompatible with grace. How can it be when Paul, the apostle of grace, has so much to say about it? A deeper appreciation of His grace, a deeper gratitude and joy, a more sacred love and adoration are the fruits of this godly fear. 

Endnote

1. Note, he does not say “work *for*” but “work *out* your own salvation.”

A TOUCHING LETTER

From Singapore

October 19, 1999

Dear Pastor Sadler,

Greetings from my husband...my son...and myself. Over the past few years, we have been studying God's Word rightly divided, making use of books, booklets, and tracts obtained from the *Berean Bible Society*. We are also thankful for the effort put in by all those who contributed articles to the *Berean Searchlight*, which we read, study, and share with friends and relatives who are interested in the message of salvation. We have learned to distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace, and are able to share the gospel of grace with people we meet without confusing it with the gospel of the kingdom meant for Israel.

We would like to make a donation to the *Berean Bible Society* in appreciation to God our heavenly Father for giving the Society the ability to faithfully put forth solid teaching material year after year, in spite of the shortage of funds and manpower. A cheque for...is enclosed for the Society to use in furthering the teaching of God's Word rightly divided.

The articles in the *Berean Searchlight* have meant a lot to us, having been used to the teaching we received in the Methodist Church we attend. We never knew that the Church (the Body of Christ) is separate from Israel. Also, we never knew that salvation cannot be lost, once received by believing that Christ died on the Cross on our behalf, to pay for our sins, and to redeem us from the curse of Adam's sin.

We rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord, and praise God for giving us the righteousness of Christ. We are no longer afraid of death, knowing that we also will be raised to life again at the Rapture, to spend eternity with our Creator.

Please convey our regards to Pastor Stam and all at *Berean Bible Society*.

In the name of our Lord
and Savior, Jesus Christ,

“A.D.”—the world writes the letters carelessly as it turns the page for the first time in the New Year; but in these letters is the open secret of the ages, for this, too, is a “year of our Lord,” an “acceptable year,” a “year of grace.” —Jesse B. Thomas

Sanctification

By Ian Peers

Ian is currently a third-year student at the Berean Bible Institute in preparation for full-time Christian service.

The person who comes to believe the gospel and receives eternal life must not come under the illusion that sin will never be a problem in his life. Sin is always near and all believers can falter in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian must always guard against the sin of the world and develop an insatiable desire to attain holiness in conduct. Sanctification is the believer's pursuit to reflect his positional sanctification by a continuous process that will effect his spirit, soul, and body.

All believers have a position of sanctification at the right hand of the Father. This is one of the spiritual blessings that all believers possess. The Scriptures say that believers have been given spiritual blessings in the heavenlies by virtue of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). The Scriptures enumerate many of these blessings and believers are to understand each one of them as they grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Writing about positional sanctification to the Ephesian saints, the Apostle Paul says, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

God the Father had ordained before the foundation of the world that all those who have believed the gospel would be given a position of holiness and purity before

His presence. This positional sanctification has not been given to believers because of their works, but because of their union with the Lord. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). Jesus Christ is holy and righteous. Each member of the Body of Christ has been given His holiness because they are spiritually united to Him. "It is not Christ *plus* sanctification; Christ *is* the believer's sanctification."¹ If it were not for positional sanctification no one would be able to stand before God at any time.

The purity that believers have positionally is to be shown in the way their lives are conducted. The holiness that God has given to believers is to filter down into their minds and souls. Believers are a peculiar people who have been purified unto good works (Titus 2:14). Jesus Christ paid for this with His own blood when He died on Calvary (Titus 2:14; Gal. 2:20). The realization of permanent sanctification before God should cause believers to pursue holiness in their daily lives. All believers are saints but not all believers live like saints (I Cor. 1:2; 3:1-10). Those who have trusted the gospel are set apart by God because of their spiritual union to the Savior. All believers are to acknowledge that they are saints and desire to demonstrate that

reality in their lives. The reality of their spiritual blessings in heaven is to transform believers' lives here on earth.

Personal sanctification does not happen instantaneously. When a person believes the gospel, he is given positional sanctification. The pursuit of a holy life will reflect the believer's position before God. This pursuit is a daily process. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to put off the old man and put on the new man. The old man is consumed in sin, but the new man was created by God "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). God created the new man out of nothing just as He did when He said "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). God did not take anything from man's inward being to create the new man. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). God dispelled our darkness when He gave us the new man.

The believer's mind is not automatically renewed when he is saved. When a sinner comes to believe the gospel, he is given a new heart and a new life (Ezek. 36:26; Eph. 2:1-10).² The mind of the believer still has left over baggage from the days that he was traveling under the condemnation of God. But this condition changes when a person believes the gospel. The Lord gives the believer the capability of being transformed by the renewing of his mind (Rom. 12:20). Unbelievers have their "understanding darkened, being

alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). Unbelievers don't have the opportunity to renew their minds because they do not have the capacity to do so. Believers have been given the ability to live holy lives because of the God-given ability to renew their minds.

The renewing of the mind takes time. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). It is "from glory to glory" that sanctification occurs. This is a gradual process that the Holy Spirit is involved in. Pursuing after sanctification requires that the believer instill the fear of God in his heart. God has promised His special presence to believers who make a conscious decision to follow Him and forsake sin (II Cor. 6:11-18). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). There are different ways to define what the fear of God means. The following definition of the usage in II Corinthians 7:1:


"Fear of God, as a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral, not a mere 'fear' of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him, a 'fear' which banishes the terror that shrinks from His presence, Rom. 8:15, and which influences the disposition and attitude of one whose

circumstances are guided by trust in God, through the indwelling Spirit of God.”³

The fear of God is a universal principle throughout the entire Bible. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). There is a difference between the fear of God for unbelievers and believers. For unbelievers, the fear of God repels them from Him. This fear exposes their sin and their need of the Savior. For believers, the fear of God brings them closer to Him. Fear of God occurs when man begins to understand a limited amount of God’s holiness. God is not only separate from sin but He is different from man. The purity of God and the sense that He is far greater than man causes man to fear Him (Isa. 6). The believer should cultivate this fear into the very fabric of his being. This can only happen when the believer is continually reading God’s Word, praying, fellowshiping with others, and serving the Lord. The believer is to work out his “salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

God wants the believer’s spirit, soul, and body to be set apart to Him. The Apostle Paul wrote “and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thes. 5:23). Prayer for others can lead them to a sanctified life. God’s involvement in the sanctifying process of the Christian walk is vital. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

God does not want only one aspect of man’s nature to be set apart to Him. He wants the entire person to be His vessel. “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). God wants the entire person to be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This takes the work of the Holy Spirit. A believer does not have to be perfect throughout his entire life to be preserved blameless. Being preserved blameless includes purging believers from the sins they commit. This purging involves the exposure of sin and the believer’s repentance (II Cor. 7). This process culminates in the eternal state when the believer goes to be with the Lord forever.

Sanctification is a wonderful truth in God’s Word. The desire to live a godly life is something that honors and exalts Him. Sanctification results in living out God’s will. This inward transformation leads to outward actions and demonstrations of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Seeking holiness in thought and conduct takes purification of one’s life and a God-given desire to deny the flesh. 

Endnotes

1. Henry Clarence Thiessen. *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979) pg. 290.
2. Believers receive the new heart because they are given the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (See II Cor. 3; Rom. 15:27).
3. W. E. Vine. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985) pg. 230.

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Berean Bible Institute's program is not an easy one. And it is not meant to be easy, but has been purposely designed to be a Bible and ministry training center that will prepare individuals for the realities of ministering the Word of God "*rightly divided*" in our sin cursed world. In other words, *BBI* is for those who are willing to invest the time, resources, and hard work necessary to properly prepare themselves for the work of ministry.



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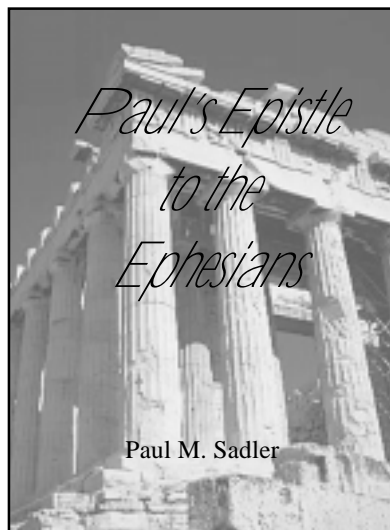
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To request a catalog or tapes from the *Lending Library*, please write: Sam and Ruth Castrova, 7900 Barbour Store Road, Willow Springs, NC 27592. All library tapes are available for loan at *no* charge. However, we do have a special request: if you have borrowed tapes more than a month ago from the Library, please return them as soon as possible to the above address. This will insure that others don't have to wait so long to receive their tapes.

CONGRATULATIONS to David and Laurie Siegmann, graduates of the *Berean Bible Institute*, who recently accepted a call to the *Altoona Bible Church*. David has accepted the position of Associate Pastor and will be assisting Pastor Ken Pebbles in the work. May God's richest blessing be upon these dear brethren as they provide spiritual leadership to the Altoona assembly long known for their faithful stand for the truth of Paul's gospel.

WE'VE GOT MAIL: With postage, especially *Return Postage*, becoming more expensive all the time, your assistance with the following will help us save time and the Lord's money in the new year:

1. If you move, please notify us immediately of your change of address, remembering to supply your *zip code*.
2. If your name and address on the *Searchlight* is incorrect, please notify us, supplying the correction.
3. We send receipts and acknowledgments for *all* gifts. Should you fail to receive a receipt for any gift you send, please inquire to make sure that we have received it. For those who are interested, the *Berean Bible Society* also provides annual reports for tax purposes upon request.

*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was sent to us by Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Martin of Kalamazoo, Michigan and was taken by Linda Stowe. The lighthouse is located in Big Bay, Michigan.

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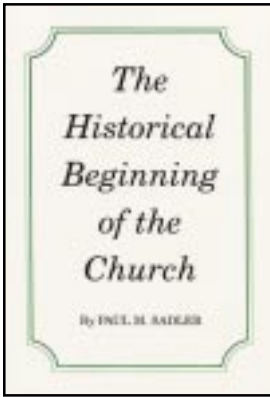
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The Historical Beginning of the Church

By Paul M. Sadler

THE ANSWER TO A PUZZLING QUESTION

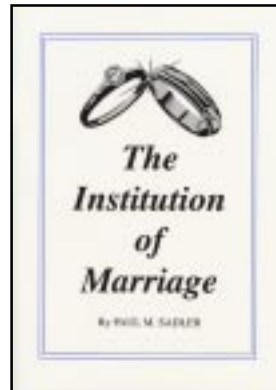


This booklet is a journey through the *Book of Acts* to determine when the Church, the Body of Christ began *historically*. Christendom, for the most part, believes the “birthday of the Church” took place on the day of Pentecost. However, as the reader will see, this view is weighed in the balance, and found wanting!

The Institution of Marriage

By Paul M. Sadler

This timely work which originally appeared in the *Berean Searchlight* is now available in booklet form. You will also find it of interest that we have *added* a section to further clarify how Romans 7 and I Corinthians 7 correspond with one another. Young and old alike should be interested to know more about God's original *blueprint* for the marriage relationship.



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**“The Son of God became the Son of Man
that He might change
the sons of men into the sons of God.”**

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