

The Berean Searchlight

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

March 2007



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

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

We are pleased to announce the soon release of my new book entitled, *Studies in James*. Those passages I purposely passed over when this series appeared in the *Searchlight*, due to the need to do additional research, have now been addressed in the book. This volume is an expositional commentary that extensively explores the epistle of James from the standpoint of the Word, rightly divided. And it takes a new look at the practical teachings of James, singling out those teachings that are applicable today. We also correct the misconception that this epistle is merely an extension of the Pauline epistles.

If you plan to purchase a copy of *James* when it is released, you'll want to be sure to read the *Introduction* entitled, *Luther's Quandary*. I explain why Martin Luther felt that the epistle of James was an *epistle of straw*. It is a classic example of the importance of not passing judgment on the Word of God, but searching for further light from the Lord in those areas where there appears to be a contradiction.

With so little published from a Grace standpoint on the ministry of James, this volume (approximately 150 pages) will be a welcome addition to your Grace library. While we haven't yet reached our goal in raising the necessary funds to complete this project, a special word of thanks is in order to those who have generously supported this undertaking. If you are interested in helping us with the remaining expense of placing this work in print, please designate your gift—*James!*


It is my sincere prayer that when this commentary is finally off the press you will be as thrilled reading it as I was in writing it. Through April 30th we are offering this volume (paperback) for the special pre-publication price of **\$7.00** each, or three (3) volumes for **\$18.00**. Orders up to \$20.00, please add \$3.00 for postage and handling—orders over \$20.00, please add 15%. Lord willing, we plan to release *Studies in James* by the end of April, so place your request today to be among the first to receive this important study aid.

Paul's challenge to Timothy is as true today as when he first delivered it to his young friend: "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

Yours because of Calvary,
Paul M. Sadler, President

“Cursed Is Every One!”

By Pastor Ricky Kurth



The Law curses “every one that continueth not in all things...of the law” (Gal. 3:10). The words “continueth” and “all” here tell us the Law demands 100% faithfulness *100% of the time!* Though this may sound unreasonable, how many of our married readers are satisfied with 99% faithfulness from your spouse? Even if you could go 70 years without sinning, then sin, the Law would curse you. This too might sound unreasonable, but if you go 70 years without killing anyone, then snap, the law won’t let you slide just because you’ve never done it before, and neither will God!

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident” (Gal. 3:11). The Greek word for “evident” here is translated “certain” when Paul says, “we brought nothing into this world, and it is *certain* that we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim. 6:7). You’ll never see a U-Haul trailer behind a hearse! And it is just as evident that no one can be justified by the Law. You might look good in your neighbor’s sight, but we’re talking about “the sight of *God*” (Gal. 3:11). Even Abraham looked good to his neighbors, but he couldn’t boast before God (Rom. 4:2), for God knew he lied about his wife.

No, “The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11), that is, the way you get to *be* just is *by faith*. “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them” (Gal. 3:12), i.e., live *eternally* (Lev. 18:5 cf. Luke 10:25-28). God is fair. If you could obey Him perfectly, He would give you eternal life. It is not technically correct to say the only way to heaven is by faith. But while there are two ways to get to the moon, by rocket and by jumping, one of these two ways is impossible! Just so, there are two ways to get to heaven, by faith and by the works of the Law (Rom. 2:6-10), but the latter is just as impossible! (Gal. 2:16).

Thankfully, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). “That the blessing of Abraham [salvation] might come on the Gentiles through...” Through *what?* Through Israel? Through circumcision, or the Law? This was true for Gentiles in the Old Testament. But today the blessing of Abraham comes on us “*through Jesus Christ.*” Why not “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Notice it doesn’t say “believe *and be good.*” It just says *believe and be saved!* “Christ died for our sins...and...rose again” (1 Cor. 15:3,4). Don’t try to add any good works to Christ’s work, for salvation is “to him that worketh *not*, but *believeth!*” (Rom. 4:5).

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 1:19-24

By Paul M. Sadler

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

—Phil. 1:19

PAUL'S CONFIDENT EXPECTATION

Although the motives of those who opposed Paul's apostleship at Rome were questionable, Paul was grateful that Christ was being preached. In this, the apostle says, he *rejoiced* because he understood that the influence of the gospel upon the household of Caesar could well have a bearing on his impending trial. Thus Paul was confident that this would turn to his *salvation* through the prayers of those at Philippi and the supply of the Spirit. Salvation is a generic term that simply means *deliverance*; therefore, it must always be interpreted in light of the context in which it is found. In the above passage, Paul is speaking about his *physical deliverance* from prison that he

might have another opportunity to visit these dear saints and continue his apostolic ministry among the Gentiles.

Those who lose their spiritual equilibrium do so many times because they overemphasize one side of the truth to the exclusion of the other. We would do well to remember that God always strikes a *balance* in the dispensing of His will. For example, both human responsibility and divine sovereignty are evident here in verse 19. The fervent prayers of these brethren for the apostle's deliverance from prison, coupled with the Spirit of God guiding Paul in his defense, would work together to secure his release. This was the apostle's confident expectation.

We want to pause here a moment to point out that verse 19 also clearly teaches that God would have us pray about *everything*, whether it is of a spiritual or physical nature. In view of the fact that God has blessed us with

all spiritual blessings today we certainly agree that our prayer life should primarily center on spiritual things, such as praying for lost souls, a fuller understanding of the Scriptures, a knowledge of God's will, wisdom, etc. Here again, however, we must keep in mind the importance of *balance* in the things of the Lord. God would also have us make known our physical requests.

“...God always strikes a *balance* in the dispensing of His will.”

Paul prayed about his *physical infirmity*, not once, but three times (II Cor. 12:7-9). Prior to his incarceration in Caesarea the apostle requested that he might have a *prosperous journey* to Rome; that is, free from hardship (Rom. 1:9,10). We are to pray for *earthly rulers* that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life to further the cause of Christ (I Tim. 2:1-3). Paul instructs us not to be an ungrateful people, as Israel was in time past; therefore, we are to return *thanks* at every *meal* for God's bountiful blessings (I Tim. 4:4,5). We are also to pray about the *circumstances* in which we might find ourselves. As we have seen, Paul coveted the prayers of those at Philippi that he would soon be *delivered* from his prison cell in Rome. The apostle writes to Philemon along these same lines: “But withal prepare me also a *lodging*: for I trust that through

your *prayers* I shall be *given unto you*” (Philemon 1:22).

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20).

While Paul exhibited a Christ-like spirit he was always concerned about being ashamed of Christ. The word “ashamed” in this verse has the idea to *disgrace*. Some may be of the persuasion that this would have been uncharacteristic of the apostle, but we must remember he was human—a man of like passions as are we. As the day approached to stand before the ungodly Nero, who was evil to the core, Paul feared he would *disgrace* the Savior by keeping silent. We would do well to bear in mind that this was the same Nero who dressed Christians “in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set them on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them.”¹ This transpired not too long after Paul stood before him. Consequently, the apostle was staring into the face of death when he offered a defense of his actions. Here, too, we need to follow Paul's example to seek the face of the Lord for *boldness* that we might freely name the name of Christ without fear (Eph. 6:19,20).

Whatever the outcome of the trial Paul wanted Christ to be *magnified* in his body “whether it be by life, or by death.” The modern-day microscope has enabled scientists to explore the cell structure of the human body as never before. The magnification of these instruments has

improved so dramatically it was recently discovered that there is an intricate cell structure *within* each main cell, which has opened a whole new field of study. In like manner, Paul wanted Christ to be magnified through him that the world could see every detail of the wonders of His grace.

Christ had transformed Paul's life, so much so that when the world came in contact with the apostle he was like a light shining in a dark place. Men were unable to withstand the wisdom with which he spoke. As they were drawn to Paul they were genuinely touched by his *love* and *compassion* for their souls. Those days were times of oppression and hopelessness, thus, Paul's offer of peace and hope in Christ was appealing to those who heard him share the gospel.

PAUL'S DILEMMA

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Everyone has something they live for if they are honest with themselves. For example: "For to me, to live is fame and fortune." "For to me, to live is sports." "For to me, to live is pleasure." "For to me, to live is video games." "For to me, to live is power." "For to me, to live is the latest fashion," etc. For the Apostle Paul, to live was Christ! He never lost sight of the fact that *grace* rescued him on the Damascus road from a life of religious bondage. Christ was all that He claimed to be as far as Paul was concerned. Many believers try to neatly compartmentalize their Christian life into secular and spiritual. This wasn't the case with the apostle; whether he was

at the marketplace or standing before King Agrippa there was no question whatsoever that he knew Christ. In addition, Christ controlled every aspect of his decision-making process. "For to me," Paul says, "to live is Christ."

The following article, which shows the importance of living a Christ-centered life, appeared in a Paterson, New Jersey newspaper. Even though it was originally published many years ago its message is timeless:

When to be Alarmed about Our Christian Life

"If you find yourself coveting any pleasure more than your prayer time, it is time to be alarmed. If you find yourself enjoying any book more than your Bible, it is time to be alarmed. If you find yourself reverencing any house more than the household of God or the local assembly, it is time to be alarmed. If you are satisfied to sit down at any table and find more satisfaction than at the Table of the Lord, then it is time to be alarmed. If you find yourself loving any person more than you love the Lord Jesus Christ, it is time to be alarmed. If you are seeking the fellowship of men more than the fellowship of the Spirit, it is time to be alarmed. Or if you are delighted in any prospect more than the coming of the Lord, it is time to be alarmed."

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We fear that many believers today take the things of the Lord far too lightly. Of course, the concern is that at the end of their life they are going to look back with *regret* at what could have been, *if only!* It reminds

us of the ill-fated voyage of the *Titanic*. *If only*, the shipbuilder would have installed ceilings in the watertight compartments the disaster would have been averted. *If only*, the Captain and crew would have heeded the ice warnings and not have been traveling so fast through an ice field things may have been different. *If only*, the lookouts in the crow's nest would have had binoculars they would have spotted the iceberg sooner and avoided the tragedy. The voyage of the *Titanic* is a long sad story of, *if only!*

When you come to the end of your life are you going to find yourself uttering those dreadful words? *If only*, I had lived a godly life when I was raising my children, perhaps they would have an interest in spiritual things today. *If only*, I had heeded the Lord's leading and went to Bible School, I might have made a difference on the mission field in those regions beyond. *If only*, I had agreed to become a Sunday School teacher, perhaps I could have helped one of our young people avoid a shipwrecked life. *If only*, I had taken the time to study the Scriptures, perhaps I could have been used of the Lord to win souls to Christ and comfort those who were crying out for help! *If only*, I hadn't been so selfish and self-serving. *If only!* As we prepare to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, mark these words, and mark them well: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last."

"But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a

desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

As Paul faced an uncertain future he found himself caught between the horns of a dilemma. On one hand he desired to depart to be with Christ, which as far as he was concerned was far better. On the other hand he felt it was needful that he remained here to minister to the Philippians' spiritual needs. This, of course, was true of all the Grace assemblies in Paul's day for they, too, would have benefited spiritually. The apostle also realized that if the outcome of the trial did go in his favor it would mean additional *fruit*, in the form of more souls being saved, more time for believers to be edified, and more rewards at that day for all concerned.

It is very clear in the passages before us that the Apostle Paul believed in *life after death*. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." To which he adds, "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Now the world uses many words to describe death, but "gain" wouldn't be one of them. If you have a retirement fund, when you receive your monthly statement and there is a significant *gain* on your investment, that's a good thing—it's to your advantage. That's exactly how Paul uses the term; he firmly believed to die is *gain*. You see, he knew what awaited him, as we should. The apostle had seen the Lord of glory face to face (Acts 26:16) and longed to be forever in His eternal presence. Paul was also caught up to the third heaven



into paradise and actually *saw* and *heard* unspeakable words that he wasn't allowed to utter (II Cor. 12:4-6). The splendor of the heavenly realm left him yearning to return.

Paul's desire was "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." The word "depart" has the idea to unloose the ropes from a mooring and sail away. As far as the apostle was concerned he was more than ready to loose the moorings of this life and cast off to the shores of eternal life. This doesn't mean he was burned out, as it is called today. I think Paul had the same attitude of the great evangelist George Whitefield who also labored day and night for the Lord. Whitefield once stated: "I am often weary in the work, but never weary of it." In the mind of the apostle, to be with Christ was far better than anything this life had to offer.

SOUL SLEEP

Paul never taught the unsound teaching of "soul sleep," as the passages we've been studying clearly

indicate. Nor did he teach the dissolution of the soul at death. Essentially "soul sleep" is the belief that the soul within man loses consciousness at death and remains in an unconscious state in the grave until the resurrection. The Seventh Day Adventists, who advocate this view, believe at the future resurrection the saved will be given immortality, but the souls of the unbeliever will be annihilated.

Whenever the Scriptures speak of the believer being *asleep* we are to understand this to be a reference to the *physical body*. After the resurrection of our Lord, in accordance with the fulfillment of the feast of first fruits, we are told, "And the graves were opened; and many **bodies** of the saints which **slept** arose" (Matt. 27:52). In similar fashion Paul states:

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

Those in Christ whose **bodies** are said to be **asleep in Jesus** will be *reunited* with their souls and spirits, which the Lord will bring with Him at the Rapture, implying they are presently alive and well. This is the secret resurrection! Every time we pay our condolences to the family of a departed loved one or friend, the body of the one lying in the casket has the appearance of being asleep. Thus we can easily relate to the above passages *experientially*.

The dissolution of the soul is the belief that death results in the *demise* of the soul. Dr. Bullinger held this view, which should not be confused with soul sleep. While we are indebted to Mr. Bullinger

for many things, this isn't one of them. He essentially believed that man is a soul, but does *not* have a soul. The soul then, according to this position, refers to the entire being of man (body & breath or the impersonal principle of life) apart from the immaterial part of our being known as the soul. Consequently, when a man breathes his last breath he ceases to exist any longer and returns back to dust until the future resurrection. This view is commonly held among the cults, the most recognizable one being the Jehovah's Witnesses. One of the insurmountable problems with this particular teaching is the individual at death is completely taken out of existence leaving *no person* to be reunited with the resurrected body.

While evidence of these false teachings can be found in the annals of church history, we are grateful for those godly leaders of past generations who have handed down the present evangelical position on the *state of the dead*,² which soundly rests on the Word of God. The bottom line is this: "What saith the Scriptures?"

According to the Scriptures, man is a soul and *also* has a soul. For example: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). In this context, the "soul" is referring to the entire being of man. Even in our day, it isn't uncommon to hear someone say, "That poor soul has been so ill." But the Scriptures add:

"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).

Here we learn we are a trichotomous being—spirit, soul, and body. Paul lists our makeup by the order of importance. The *spirit* is the rational part of our being, which is God-conscious (Rom. 1:9). The *soul* is the seat of our emotions and would be the self-conscious part of our being (Psa. 42:4,5). The *body* is merely the tent that houses our soul and spirit. The soul and spirit are the immaterial parts of our being that combine to form our personality—they make us who we are according to the handiwork of God. They also have a mysterious link with the blood that courses through our veins by coalescing together to sustain *life*.

Notice how the Word of God carefully distinguishes between the *body* and *soul* when Elijah miraculously restored the life of the widow's son of Zarephath.

"And he [Elijah] stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (I Kings 17:21,22).

When the soul and spirit leave the body, the body is dead (James 2:26). Interestingly in the disembodied state the soul and spirit have some type of corporal makeup that goes far beyond our present comprehension. We do know, however, that our identity, personality, and memory are preserved in the disembodied state. Here are two examples:

When the Lord allowed Samuel to return from paradise after his death, King Saul recognized him *immediately*. As they conversed, Samuel revealed to Saul that he and his sons would lose their lives at the hand of the Philistines the very next day (I Sam. 28:3,7-19). Although Moses' body lay in the dust of the earth, he too was permitted to return from paradise in a disembodied state to appear on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah. Apparently the Spirit of God revealed to Peter, James, and John that it was Moses whom they not only *saw* but *heard* speaking about our Lord's impending death at Calvary (Matt. 17:1-6 cf. Luke 9:28-36).

As we return to Philippians, it was Paul's confident expectation to *immediately* be with the Lord in a *disembodied state*, while he awaited the future resurrection of the Body of Christ. Paul's "to die is gain" and "to depart to be

with Christ, which is far better" most assuredly speaks to the fact that he would step into the very presence of the Lord at the moment of his death, which will be true of each of us who have believed as well. Paul leaves no stone unturned on this matter when he states: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we **labor**, that, whether **present** [i.e. in heaven] or **absent** [if we remain here], we may be accepted of Him" (II Cor. 5:8,9).

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Parsons Electronic Edition.*
2. *Bibliography:* For a more comprehensive study on the "State of the Dead," see: *Man, His Nature and Destiny* by C. R. Stam, *A Dispensational Theology* by Charles F. Baker, *The State and Place of the Dead*, by Dr. Ed Bedore.

Spring Bible Conference

Dates: March 23-25, 2007

Location: *Grace Bible Fellowship of Nokomis*
2600 N. Tamiami Trail
Nokomis, Florida

Speaker: Pastor Ricky Kurth
Berean Bible Society
Germantown, WI

This conference is also your opportunity to meet and fellowship with noted Grace writer Robert Brock!

For more information, please contact:

Pastor Whitey Myers at 941-496-8051
or e-mail: Elvnmyers@aol.com



Upcoming Bible Conferences



Pennsylvania Bible Conference

Location: *Elco Bible Church, Myerstown, PA*

Dates: March 24-25, 2007

Speaker: Pastor Paul M. Sadler

For directions and additional information,
please contact:

William Schaeffer at (717) 949-3020

Northeast Ohio Bible Conference

Location: *Grace Gospel Church
5730 Adams Avenue
Ashtabula, OH*

Dates: March 30 - April 1, 2007

Speaker: Pastor Paul M. Sadler

For directions and additional information,
please contact:

Pastor David Adams at (440) 992-9008

Ohio Bible Conference

Location: *Grace Bible Church, Tipp City, OH*

Dates: April 28-29, 2007

Speaker: Pastor Paul M. Sadler

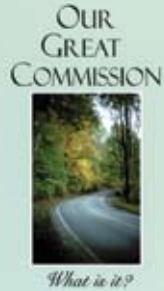
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***Come join us as we
feast on the riches
of God's grace!***

What This Commission Does and Does Not Say

By C. R. Stam



JOHN 20:21-23

The Power to Remit Sins

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (Ver. 21). How can anyone possibly read these words and eliminate them from the commission our Lord gave His eleven apostles in the forty days between His resurrection and ascension? Yet, with all the talk we have heard about “the great commission” and the urgency of fulfilling this commission *“in our generation,”* most Protestant fundamentalists have treated this segment of the commission as though it were non-existent—except in such hymns or devotional sermons as have taken note of the words, *“so send I you.”*

Generally speaking, it has only been when faced directly with the words, *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,”* that these brethren have even attempted to deal with the passage in greater detail.

It should be carefully observed that when our Lord said, *“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,”*

“...He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (Ver. 22).

Further, it should be noted that the last phrase of Verse 22 belongs with Verse 23, so that together they read:

“Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (Vers. 22,23).

In other words, in sending them forth, the Lord breathed on them, imparting the Holy Spirit and divine authority to remit⁷ sins.

Bewildered Protestants have found it difficult to accept this part of the “great commission,” and in general have vainly tried to explain it away. This, of course, because the claims of the Roman Catholic Church to “absolution” are largely based upon this passage.

Some of the denominations also make Rome’s claims in modified form in their ritualistic creeds—but with reservations and apologies. Others argue that our Lord here merely gave the apostles



authority to *state the terms* of salvation. Others again contend that the apostles were given the ability to *discern and declare* whose sins were forgiven and whose were not. Still others hold that our Lord meant only to impress upon His followers the fact that through *their* conduct some would accept Christ, while others would reject Him. But *all* these arguments wrest the natural, obvious meaning from our Lord's plain words. If He did not mean what He said, why did He not say what He meant?

Rome, of course, contends that our Lord's words in John 20:23 mean exactly what they say, and objects strenuously when Protestants modify, qualify, or in any way alter their obvious meaning.

Since the Church of today is, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, a perpetuation of the organization which Christ instituted when He was on earth—and many Protestants agree—this question takes on enormous theological significance.

In Matthew 18:18 our Lord said to His disciples:

“Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

And to Peter personally He said:

“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” (16:19).

On the basis of these passages, along with that regarding the remission of sins in John 20, the Church of Rome claims that our Lord committed authority in spiritual matters to the Church, represented by the twelve apostles and personified in the Apostle Peter. And since the Church of today is a perpetuation of that which our Lord founded (according to Rome), spiritual authority resides in the Church, with the apostolic body perpetuated in the College of Bishops, and one of their own number, the Pope, St. Peter's successor, as their chief and the supreme head of the Church on earth.

Protestants may lift their hands in horror at such claims, but next to the Roman Catholic interpretation their own arguments are weak indeed.

Must we then return to Rome, acknowledge her claims and commit our souls to men who can either bless or curse us? No, the solution to this problem is again

a dispensational one, a question of “rightly dividing the Word of truth.” It lies in the fact that with Israel’s rejection of Christ and His kingdom, God interrupted the prophetic program and through Paul, ushered in a *new dispensation*, “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:1-3).

The majority of Christians still believe, but with many reservations, that the Body of Christ, the Church of today, began under the ministry of Peter and the eleven at Pentecost. But at Pentecost Peter, “filled with the Holy Ghost,” said nothing whatever about the Body of Christ. Rather he pointed to Joel’s prophecy and said without qualification: “*This is that.*” Thus Protestantism’s problem with John 20:23 is the result of a “Roman hangover,” the result of following Peter rather than Paul.

If, then, Matthew 16:19; 18:18 and John 20:23 mean what they say, we must acknowledge that divine authority was conferred by our Lord upon the apostles and upon Peter in particular as their head, and that this authority extended even to the remission of sins.

The fact is, that working under their “great commission,” the apostles did baptize “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38).

Was the remission of sins, then, left in the hands of failing human beings? No, not *failing* human beings, for not only did our Lord breathe the Holy Spirit into them so that they could remit sins (John 20:22,23), but later, at Pentecost, they were *all* “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:4), and with this

filling miraculous gifts were bestowed upon them, *including the gift of knowledge.*

This is the answer to those who ask: “Could not some shrewd person have deceived them?” *Did Ananias and Sapphira deceive Peter?* They were carried out dead!

“Was the remission of sins, then, left in the hands of failing human beings?”

Thus the apostles could represent our Lord in His absence, even to the forgiveness of sins, and what they “bound” on earth was “bound” in heaven. Whose soever sins they remitted *were* remitted unto them as they baptized them “for the remission of sins.”

Note: we do not teach, as some do, that there is saving power in baptism itself. Not at all. But *water baptism was required for salvation at that time*, thus submission to baptism by water was the natural expression of faith; it was coming to God in the way that He had prescribed. This, in every age, is what has brought salvation.

WHAT THE COMMISSION DOES NOT SAY

A consideration of what the commission to the eleven does *not* say is, perhaps, a greater eye-opener than a consideration of what it *does* say.

Unless the author’s experience in this matter is entirely unique, it may greatly surprise many of

our readers to note that the so-called “great commission”:

Does not even contain the word “*grace*,” or refer to “*the gospel of the grace of God*.”

Does not mention “*the preaching of the cross*.”

Does not mention *salvation through the blood of Christ*, much less by *faith* in His shed blood.

Does not mention *Christ’s death as the payment for sin*, or His all-sufficient work of redemption as the basis for salvation.

Does not offer salvation as the gift of God, *apart from works*.

Does not offer salvation *apart from the law of Moses*.

Does not mention salvation by *faith alone*, apart from the law or works.

Does not associate Christ’s death and resurrection with our *justification*.

Does not state that there is “*no difference*” between Jew and Gentile; in fact, it does the opposite by giving Israel priority.

Does not contain one word about *the Body of Christ*, or about our divine baptism into Christ and His Body.


Does not contain one word about a *heavenly position and prospect*, or “*all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ*.”

Under the so-called “great commission,” then, we would not be preaching *any* of the above. And when we realize that all this is *the very theme* of Paul’s God-given message, and ours, does it not become irresistibly evident that there has been a change in dispensation, a change in program, since our Lord commissioned the eleven?

“...the solution to this problem is again a dispensational one.”

If the so-called “great commission” is for our obedience and we tell a sinner that he may be saved by grace through faith, apart from works or the law, because Christ died for his sins, are we not working outside, even *contrary* to our commission?

It is not until we come to Paul that we learn about “the preaching of the cross” *as good news* (I Cor. 1:18), “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), justification through Christ’s finished work, apart from the law and apart from works (Acts 13:38,39; Rom. 3:21; 4:5; Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; etc.), “the mystery” of the “one body” with its “one baptism,” and its heavenly position, blessings and prospect (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:3; 2:4-7,16; 3:1-6; 4:4,5; Col. 3:1-3; etc.).

Yet today pastors and Bible teachers, living more than 1900 years after the commission given to the eleven, and the subsequent raising up of Paul, claim to be working under the so-called “great commission”! Is it any wonder that an ever-deepening confusion has gripped the Church?⁸ 

Endnotes

7. Elsewhere the same Greek word is rendered “forgive.”
8. We refer to *theological* confusion, of course, for we are well aware of the artificial union that the new evangelicalism has partially succeeded in bringing about through its false emphasis on love and tolerance.



Abounding in This Grace Also

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

We ended last month's study of II Corinthians 8 and 9 in II Corinthians 8:15. While Paul picks up the subject of giving again in Chapter 9, the remainder of Chapter 8 deals with the care that must always be taken by spiritual leaders to ensure the Lord's money is handled by honest men, in a manner so open that the ministry cannot possibly be blamed for misuse of such funds. At first it seems strange that this section on fiscal integrity should be sandwiched in between two passages on giving. However, the assurance of such integrity is an integral part of the giving process. God's people are understandably hesitant to give unless they are confident their hard-earned money will not be misused, and rightly so. While this section is important, it is a separate subject from that which we are currently considering, and so we will pick up our study in Chapter 9.

“For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you” (II Cor. 9:1).

It was unnecessary for Paul to write the Corinthians about the financial need of “the saints.” These were the Pentecostal saints who lacked for nothing, as long as the Spirit supernaturally empowered them to pool their resources and live in harmony (Acts 4:34). But when Israel rejected the Spirit by stoning a Spirit-filled man, these sincere saints in Jerusalem became “*the poor saints*” at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). At the Jerusalem Council, Paul was asked to remember these poor saints, something he was eager to do (Gal. 2:10), encouraging the Gentiles to whom he ministered to contribute to this cause.

It was more than appropriate for the Gentiles to help these kingdom saints. After all, they had been made partaker of Israel's spiritual things, and so it was only right that they minister to them in material things (Rom. 15:27). Of course, today God's people should minister material

things to the spiritual leaders who *currently* minister to them in spiritual matters (I Cor. 9:11). This enables these men of God to minister to the *spiritually* “poor saints” who are unaware of “*the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles*” (Col. 1:27). Today, if anything is “superfluous,” it is for Grace leaders to have to remind us of *this* need, for a glance at the professing church shows the great need of our message.

“For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many” (II Cor. 9:2).

The reason it was superfluous for Paul to write them further of this need is because they had been convinced of it a year earlier, and had pledged a considerable amount of money in response.

But therein lay the rub. Paul had *boasted* about the Corinthians’ promise to the Macedonians, many of whom had been provoked to give beyond their power when they heard of the Corinthian zeal. Now that the Corinthians had failed to deliver on their promise, it looked like Paul was guilty of *fraud*, having *bilked* the poor Macedonians into giving beyond their means by telling them of Corinthian liberality that never came to pass!

“Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

“Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting” (II Cor. 9:3,4).

Here Paul warns the Corinthians that he might just “happen” to bring some Macedonians along on his trip to Corinth! Imagine how embarrassed these wealthy Corinthians would be in the presence of such sacrificial givers! Poor citizens don’t mind paying their taxes when they are assured the rich are paying their share, but when they learn the rich are evading their responsibility, they rightfully feel betrayed. Paul here offers the Corinthians the opportunity to make good on their vow and avoid a similarly embarrassing situation.

How generous for Paul to offer to *share* in the shame that would be theirs if they did not deliver what they had promised! I’m sure this happens to the reader all the time; you know how your boss jumps at the chance to share the blame for your failures at work! Such is rarely the case, of course, but such was the heart of Paul!

“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness” (II Cor. 9:5).

Paul was thoughtfully sending men to Corinth ahead of his own visit, graciously allowing the Corinthians to save face by delivering on their promise *before* the weight of his apostolic visit fell on their

assembly. If they failed to avail themselves of this opportunity, delaying their contribution until Paul himself arrived, it would make them look “covetous.” It would appear that they refused to part with their pledge until Paul himself came and *pried it out of their hands!*

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (II Cor. 9:6).

Comparing the believer’s giving to farming is an excellent comparison. As the sower sows his seed, it appears he is taking perfectly good seed and *throwing it away*. When we give to the Lord’s work, we sometimes hear unbelievers say, “You’re just *throwing your money away!*” But Paul says when we give of our finances to the ministry we are *sowing*, not *throwing!* Far from being a waste of money, such contributions are *investments in eternity*.



Every farmer knows if you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. Of course, the only thing this suburban-grown writer has ever sown was the seed for our lawn. We frankly didn’t know what we were doing, but we knew enough from this verse to sow *heavily*, crisscrossing the seed and fertilizer with our broadcast spreader beyond what was recommended.¹ The result was a lawn that was the envy of the neighborhood—at

least until the ever-increasing demands of the ministry in ensuing years led to a criminal neglect of weed-killer that resulted in the finest crop of dandelions in the tri-county area. We know it’s wrong to so blame the ministry, but that’s our story, and we’re sticking to it!

But what could the Corinthians hope to “reap” by sowing bountifully to the poor saints at Jerusalem? Ah, the *acceptance* of these kingdom saints as brethren. You’ll remember at the Jerusalem Council, the kingdom saints agreed to accept the salvation of the Gentiles without circumcision as legitimate. But they insisted that these new brethren at least remember to “*abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood*” (Acts 15:20). Obviously they accepted the Gentiles as brethren with some reservation! But with Paul’s collection among the Gentiles for the kingdom saints, there arose an opportunity to cement the relationship between these Hebrew believers and the Body of Christ. If the Gentiles sowed bountifully, they would reap a bountiful acceptance among their Jewish brethren.

But what do God’s people *today* hope to reap by bountiful sowing to the Lord’s work? First, all true believers support the ministry in the hope of seeing souls come to know Christ. Then all *Grace* believers sow of their finances also hoping to “*make all men see what is the*

fellowship of the mystery” (Eph. 3:9). While these things are reward enough in and of themselves when they happen, surely those who sow bountifully to the Lord’s work will *also* reap a bountiful *reward* at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Cor. 9:7).

Notice that God expects “*every man*” to give. While some cannot give as much as others, *all* can give *something*.

The Greek word for “*purpose*” is a compound word that means “*to choose before,*” and so speaks of how we should *plan* our giving. Just as we must budget our finances to allot for our monthly bills, God expects us to *purpose beforehand* what we plan to give to His work. Too often we set money aside for everything else, and then give God what’s left, instead of what’s right.



How much is right? Under Grace, that is up to the giver. But Paul says whatever the giver determines to give, it must come from “*his heart,*” and must not be given “*grudgingly, or of necessity.*” While attending a baseball game in Milwaukee with our son, a home run hit by the visiting team was caught by a man sitting near us. The boisterous crowd began to goad the man into throwing the ball back on to the field, to show contempt for the prized souvenir because it originated with the opposing team, ala the Cub fans in Chicago’s Wrigley Field. The man was reluctant to do so; after all, a souvenir is a souvenir! Had he complied, the crowd would have been pleased, but the man would have felt coerced. Just so, while God is pleased with our giving, He is anxious that we never feel coerced, but that we rather give out of a heart of gratitude for all He has done for us.

It is interesting that the Greek word for “*grudgingly*” is translated “*sorrow*” in John 16:21, and refers to the sorrow of the labor pains a woman experiences when giving birth. Quite frankly, if parting with your riches causes you the same amount of pain and suffering a woman endures when parting with a baby, God doesn’t want your money. If you give with such a poor spirit, God will bless and use your money, and even reward you for giving it, but your reward will not be what it could have been. Allow us to illustrate this principle of grace from the Book of Philemon, the epistle that doesn’t *teach* the great doctrines of Grace, it *illustrates* them.

Philemon’s slave Onesimus ran away, only to meet up with Paul and get saved. Paul returned Onesimus to his master, but in light

of Philemon's debt to Paul for leading him to Christ, Paul considered *keeping* Onesimus that he might minister to Paul in Philemon's place. "But without thy mind would I do nothing," Paul told him, "that thy benefit should not be as it were *of necessity*, but *willingly*" (Phile. 1:14). Had Paul kept Philemon's servant as his own, Philemon would have benefited from this by being rewarded at the Bema Seat. But if Philemon were to extend his servant to Paul *willingly*, and not merely because of the "necessity" of the circumstances, Philemon would benefit *much more* in that great day of reward. In the same way, all financial support of God's work will earn a reward, but *willingness* in such giving will extend our benefit beyond imagination when someday we stand before the throne.

The Greek word for "*cheerful*" here is *hilaros*, from which we get our word *hilarious*, suggesting God loves a hilarious giver! These words are being penned in mid-December, when it is hard to turn on the television without witnessing a newly "converted" Ebenezer Scrooge blissfully parting with his wealth. If the "conversion" of this miserable miser to "the Christmas spirit" produced such gleeful benevolence, how much more should the genuine conversion of our lost soul lead to even more cheerful generosity.

Perhaps the reader has heard about the pastor who said to his parishioner, "I cried when I saw how large a check you wrote to the church." His parishioner asked, "How long did you cry?" "About a minute," replied the pastor. "That's nothing, I cried for an *hour* when I wrote it!" Nothing cheerful about that!

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Cor. 9:8).

There is a tendency to believe our finances are accumulated solely by our own hard work and wise decisions. While this may be solely true for the unbeliever, we have God's word on it that *for the believer* it is *He* who prospers us (I Cor. 16:2), and makes "*all grace*" abound toward us, as He says here. In this context, "*grace*" cannot refer to our *spiritual* blessings, for these had *already* abounded toward the Corinthians as believers (Eph. 1:3), and Paul speaks here of grace that God "is able" to give, present tense. No, in this context "*grace*" has already been defined as the grace of *giving* (8:1,6,7,19). And so Paul is reminding us that God gives to us financially—not just so that we can have all sufficiency in all things *in life*, meeting our financial *needs* if not our *wants* (Phil. 4:19), but also that we might "*abound to every good work.*" And in this context, the "good work" of which Paul speaks is unquestionably the "good work" of *giving to the Lord* (I Tim. 6:18 cf. Matt. 26:10). Earlier in this epistle, Paul tells us that God *comforts* us not to make us *comfortable*, but to make us *comforters of others* (II Cor. 1:4). Just so, God *prosper*s us not to make us *prosperous*, as the "health

and wealth” prosperity preachers would have us believe, but that we might in turn *prosper His ministry*.

“As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever” (II Cor. 9:9).

Paul could hardly have selected a more appropriate verse to reinforce his words! The quote is from Psalm 112:9, a passage that begins by blessing the man that fears the Lord (v. 1). His blessing included “wealth and riches” (v. 3), blessings which enabled him to lend to the poor (v. 5), which was tantamount to lending to *the Lord* (Prov. 19:17). He was encouraged to conduct his financial affairs “with discretion” (Psa. 112:5), so that he could *afford* to give to the Lord, as should we. Because he was promised everlasting reward (v. 6), he didn’t let evil tidings of downward turns in the economy discourage his giving (v. 7), and nor should we. His heart was “fixed” and determined to be faithful in his giving, “trusting in the Lord” that He would provide his needs tomorrow if he gave to the Lord today, as should we. He was not “afraid” to *continue* giving until he saw his enemies defeated (v. 8), just as we need not fear to give until all our enemies are vanquished at the Rapture. Finally, his rewards will be eternal (v. 9), as will ours.

“Too often we...give God what’s left,
instead of what’s right.”

“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness” (II Cor. 9:10).

If you give grain to your wife, she can make you a meal. However, if you give grain to a *farmer*, he can *plant* your seed and grow a crop that can feed you *and* many others! Similarly, all money that you give to the Lord’s work ministers seed to the sower, enabling your pastor to not only teach God’s Word to *you*, but to others as well, thereby increasing the fruits of your righteousness.

“Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God” (II Cor. 9:11,12).

Paul stated earlier, as he states here, that God enriches us *materially* so that we can be bountiful givers. However here he enlarges upon that thought, and shows how our bountiful giving then comes full circle. God gave to the Corinthians, who gave to the poor saints (eventually!), who in turn gave thanks back to God! Today, God blesses us financially that we might give, that God’s people might be blessed and others might be reached, who in turn give thanks back to God! While some speak of

“the circle of life,” Paul speaks here of the circle of *eternal* life, a circle in which givers are blessed to be a part.

“Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

“And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you” (II Cor. 9:13,14).

Here Paul assures the Corinthians that their contribution would indeed convince the poor saints that the Corinthian “professed subjection unto the gospel” was legit, and would cause them to not just pray for them, but to actually “*long*” for them! What a rich harvest of prayerful support and good will they had the opportunity to reap among the kingdom saints!

It is interesting that Paul calls the collection for the poor saints an “*experiment*.” He wasn’t at all sure that the kingdom saints would *accept* charity from these new Gentile brethren, and so asked the Romans if they would pray to that end (15:31).

But in a larger sense, the entire concept of giving under Grace was an experiment on God’s part. In Old Testament times, the ministry of the priesthood was supported by *mandatory* giving called *tithing*. To expect that the ministry under Grace would be maintained entirely by *voluntary* giving was a bold experiment indeed! Imagine telling the citizens of the United States that from now on their financial support of the government would be completely voluntary!


Not that *God* had any doubt that this experiment of grace giving would work. While scientists often perform experiments not knowing what the outcome will be, science *teachers* often conduct experiments in the classroom to prove to the students what they already know to be true.² And so it is that while God Himself knew His ministry could operate solely on the basis of voluntary giving, we wonder if perhaps the angels had their doubts. But when God’s people give as they should and God’s work is thus enabled to function for Him, the principalities and powers in heavenly places are convinced of the manifold wisdom of God in this area, as in all others (Eph. 3:10).



“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (II Cor. 9:15).

Paul closes this passage on giving by reminding us once again of the One who gave *Himself* for us on Calvary. While the Macedonian gift was nearly unspeakable when one considers their deep poverty,

no one would have ever dared to speak and ask God the Father to give His Son for our sins, making it a *truly* unspeakable gift!

We close by encouraging the reader to seriously consider becoming a *regular* supporter of ministries that preach the gospel of the grace of God and teach God's Word, *rightly divided*. The sand is swiftly passing through the hourglass of time, and the moments remaining in the dispensation of the grace of God are quickly *running out*. The moment we hear the trump, it will be eternally too late to give sacrificially to the Lord's work. And so we would encourage you now to give what you cannot keep (I Tim. 6:7) in order that you might gain that which you *cannot lose*, eternal rewards with Him. 

Endnotes

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Question Box

“Will water baptism be practiced again in the Tribulation?”

It does appear that *water baptism* will play a role in the terms of salvation during the coming day of the Lord. We know, for example, the gospel of the kingdom will again be preached, which included this water ceremony (Matt. 24:14 cf. Mark 16:15,16). When baptism was practiced by John and the twelve it was to manifest Christ to Israel (John 1:31). This will again be needful during the future Tribulation period following the Rapture. Since Israel was to be a kingdom of priests it was essential for John the Baptist to baptize believing Israelites into the priesthood (Ex. 19:5,6; 29:1-4; Isa. 61:6). It will be necessary for this to be continued during the time of Jacob's Trouble as well. As we know, in time past, water baptism symbolized the washing away of Israel's sins. While this aspect of the water rite will be replaced with the understanding that believing Israel will be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18,19), baptism will still be observed as an expression of faith in Christ's death.

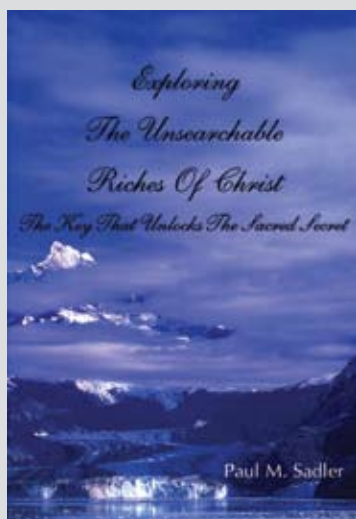
It is our firm conviction that water baptism will again be practiced when God resumes the prophetic program in the coming day of the Lord. God will pick up right where He left off at Pentecost. What we witness in Acts Chapters 2 and 3 will be reinstated at the beginning of the Tribulation.

—Pastor Sadler

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From Oklahoma:

“May 2007 be a *very blessed one* and the hope we have of His coming give us the *joy* we should have constantly. We have *sooooo* much to be thankful for as *He* provides *all* of our *needs* according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!”

From Indiana:

“I am enclosing a check to help pay for the little booklet I receive each month from you. I appreciate it and am always interested in the articles you choose.”

From Pennsylvania:

“Here is a small gift to be used in whatever way you see fit in your wonderful ministry. We’ve been blessed by the *Searchlight*.”

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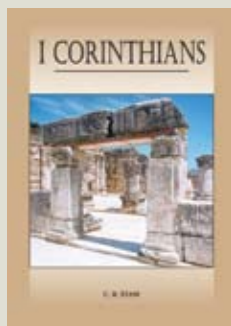
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Paul Beseches the Church (Part 2)

Romans 12:1-2

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

The Apostle Paul's appeal to the Church in this passage is based on what each individual member has received through faith in Christ. "*By the mercies of God*" is reference to all that Jesus Christ has provided for and made available to those who believe, as he had explained it in his letter to the saints in Rome. All of mankind's sinful condition and dire need of a savior is made clear (Rom. 1:18-3:20); the good news that all who believe will be freely justified in God's sight and declared righteous is boldly proclaimed (Rom. 3:21-4:25); what it means to be justified by faith and identified with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is expounded on (Rom. 5:1-8:39); an explanation of why God has temporarily set Israel aside in unbelief, how He is presently dealing with unbelieving Israel, and the assurance that He will

eventually fulfill all of His covenant promises to Israel is given (Rom. 9:1-11:38).

Each member of the Body of Christ is called upon to offer themselves as "*a living sacrifice,*" given over to the service of God. Israel was called to serve God as a witness to the nations, but being set aside in unbelief they cannot fulfill that calling in this present dispensation. Today it is the Church that has been given the privileged opportunity to serve the Lord and it is only "*reasonable*" that, by faith, we choose to do so. If we think like the world we will not yield to God's call on our life, but when "*transformed*" by the "*renewing*" of our "*minds*" we can "*prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*" as we live it out through faith. Through Paul's letter to Rome, it is God Who beseches us to do this very thing.

Fall Semester begins August 20, 2007!

For more information about **BBI**, please contact Dr. W. Edward Bedore at: **Berean Bible Institute**, 116 S. Kettle Moraine Drive, P.O. Box 587, Slinger, WI 53086-0587, phone: (262) 644-5504, fax: (262) 644-5507, e-mail: bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org, web address: www.bereanbibleinstitute.org.



It's not too early to register for the fall semester!

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grace Bible Church of Madison, Wisconsin, is looking for a pastor. This historic Grace church has a fine building and a solid core of Grace believers. If you or someone you know are interested, contact GBC Board President Robert Vandervort at rcvand1@charter.net, or at 608-575-2603.

Grace For Today would like to invite you to their 4th Annual Encouragement Conference, to be held Memorial Day weekend (May 26-28) at the *Eddy Farm Retreat and Conference Center*, located on the Delaware River in Sparrow Bush, New York, near Port Jervis. Speakers will include: Paul Sadler, David Hobbs, Leon Gilchrist, Elizabeth Kizonas, Joe Torres, John Mark Stevens, Dennis Kizonas and others. To receive a conference brochure and registration form, please contact *Grace For Today*, PO Box 798, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108, or call: 1-800-803-0003, or write Alba DeGracia at: registrar@gracefortoday.org. More next month!

Midwest Grace Fellowship is pleased to announce their annual conference will be held this year June 1-3 at the *Miracle Hills Ranch* in Bethany, Missouri. For more information, contact Dan Heyle, 21516 W. 250th Place, Bethany MO 64424-8191, or phone: 660-425-6853.

Celebrate Grace Camp will be held July 22-27 near Montrose, Colorado. This year's featured speaker will be *Berean Bible Institute* director Dr. Ed Bedore. For more information about this annual opportunity for fun, fellowship and feasting on the Word, write to hosts Jerry & Judy Worthley at: 0627 CR3, Canon City, CO 81212, or phone them at: 719-276-2469.

Two Minute Turmoil? Recipients of our daily e-mail devotional sometimes contact us to let us know they've stopped receiving *Two Minutes With the Bible*. Often this is because their spam-catcher has misidentified us as spam. And so, should you experience an interruption in *Two Minute* delivery, we encourage you to contact your e-mail provider. A couple of clicks can get us off of their blacklist! If that doesn't help, just let us know and we'll be happy to look into the matter further.

BBS Web Site Year in Review: Webmaster Richard Church reports that 2006 brought 284,720 visitors to www.bereanbiblesociety.org, an average of 780 visitors per day, for which we thank God.

The *Lightship Columbia* graces our cover. Lighthouse ships had no propulsion, and were usually permanently anchored. Our thanks to Wayne McMorran, who served on a lightship, for telling us about them. Astoria, Oregon's *Columbia* was anchored 5 miles out to sea from 1950-1979, marking the entrance to the Columbia River.

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