

The Berean Searchlight

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

April 2003



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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.

The *Berean Searchlight* is the official organ of the *Berean Bible Society*, and is sent free of charge to any who request it.

Editor: Paul M. Sadler; Composition and Layout: Kevin J. Sadler

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

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

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

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

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

The *Berean Searchlight* (ISSN 0005-8890), April 2003. Volume 64, Number 2.

The *Berean Searchlight* is published monthly (except July) at no subscription price, by *Berean Bible Society*, N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022-0756. Second-class postage paid at Germantown, WI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Berean Searchlight*, N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022-0756.



From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (II Cor. 4:1,2). As we enter our 63rd year of publication, a word is due our readers with regard to the editorial policy of the *Berean Searchlight*.

First, we remain committed, by the grace of God, to the “preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery,” that blessed message which has brought to so many believers the full assurance of understanding. This is the blessed truth that unshackles believers from the traditions and commandments of men.

Second, we will with God’s help continue to stand firm against the inroads of new evangelicalism, extremism, and error, for we know how fast the *leaven* of false doctrine spreads. God’s Word commands us both to “stand” for what is right and “withstand” that which is wrong (I Cor. 16:13 cf. Eph. 6:13).

Third, we will continue to uphold and encourage those of like-precious faith who maintain a consistent testimony, not only for the truth and a separated Christian life, but against the rising tide of apostasy.

Fourth, while we strive to continue faithful, it is our desire to further the cause of Christ through the Internet, the *Searchlight*, our books and booklets, conference ministry, and newspaper columns, seeking to win the lost to Christ and establish believers in the Word, rightly divided.

Already God has done great things for us. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to reach greater numbers through the above ministries, and to show them the glory of the message that God has so graciously entrusted to us! We can, if God’s people will dedicate themselves and their means to Him. Let’s all pray about this as never before, and may God keep us ever moving forward by His grace, for His glory.

Thanks for your encouragement and your help in the work, and may God richly bless you in your Christian life and testimony.

Yours in His love and service,

C. R. Stam, Founder

Paul M. Sadler, President

Images of Grace

Young and old alike attended the Grace Singles' Conference held in West Bend, Wisconsin this year. About 40 were in attendance to fellowship around the study of God's Word and enjoy a host of activities. The *Kettle Moraine Bible Church* hosted the event, with meetings at the *Berean Bible Society* and the *Inspiration Center* south of Milwaukee.



Pastor Ricky Kurth
Challenging the Gang



Pastor John Fredericksen
Organizer and Scholar



Pastor Mike Keshan
(Right Front) Our Host



Attendees
Chapel Time



Piano Interlude



Departure to Next Activity

You never know, this could be the spark that begins a new relationship in the Lord! Whatsoever God joins together let no man put asunder!

The Wonders of His Grace

By Paul M. Sadler



“Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer.”

—**Phile. 1:1**

Paul’s letter to Philemon is a masterpiece of Christian correspondence. It is a prime example of how to deal with a sensitive issue in the proper manner. In the New Testament the epistles mark a new form of revelation. As we know, in time past the will of God was made known through the law, the prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospel narratives. When God introduced the format of the epistles, He adopted a more personal and direct method to communicate His will.

Like the facets of a diamond, this particular letter is a demonstration of God’s grace from different perspectives. The narrative opens with an affectionate greeting—“Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer.” Paul had a special place in his heart for Philemon, having led him to the Lord. This joyous occasion probably took place while the apostle resided at Ephesus, where it is

said “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10). This is what Paul means when he says with all humility, “albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides” (Phile. 1:19).

Little wonder he addresses him, not simply as “beloved,” but “dearly beloved.” So Paul and Philemon had a very special relationship, but grace doesn’t take advantage of a brother in Christ on the basis that a debt of gratitude is owed. Grace is never presumptuous; it always takes into consideration the feelings and preferences of others.

YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN’T HIDE

The story of Philemon unfolds against the backdrop of slavery. Sadly, slavery was a fact of life in biblical times. There were at least four ways to become a slave: If a thief was unable to pay restitution he became the property of another; parents often sold their children into slavery; a man could sell himself into slavery to pay a debt; and one could be born into it. For the sake of the gospel Paul never advocated the abolition of slavery, but he did perceive the gospel would eventually eradicate it, which indeed it has for the most part.

Since slavery was woven throughout the fabric of the ancient world, it should not seem unusual that Philemon was a slave owner, even though he was a believer. While we tend to envision

slaves chained together treading through the mud pits of Egypt, many were trusted servants who were given a wide range of responsibilities in their master's affairs. This was the case with one of Philemon's slaves named Onesimus. A seemingly trustworthy member of the household, Onesimus took advantage of his position by stealing from his master and fleeing from Colosse. Consequently, Paul says to his friend in the faith, "Which in time past [he] was to thee unprofitable" (vs. 11).

Why Onesimus ran away we are not told. Surely it could not have been that Philemon was a cruel taskmaster. Quite the contrary, he had the reputation of being an honorable man. In fact, his faith and love are crowning virtues in these opening passages. Paul says of him, "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love" (vs. 7). Philemon had received the saints into his home to worship, and, if nothing else, he was at least fair with his servants. It seems more probable that Onesimus had *rebelled* against his master who had faithfully shared with him the good news that Christ died for his sins.¹

What's in a name? Back in biblical times names had great significance attached to them. Onesimus means profitable or helpful. But he was anything but helpful. He was a rebellious sinner who hardened his heart against God, betrayed his master's trust, and ran away. You can run from God, but you can't hide! God has unique ways of bringing the sinner and the gospel of salvation together. In this regard, I have had more funerals

than I care to remember over the years, but one thing I've always been conscious of at such occasions is the providence of God. With one turn of the wheel, God alters the path of a sinner who would rarely darken a church door, to bring him under the sound of the gospel.

"God has unique ways of bringing the sinner and the gospel of salvation together."

Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, relates this account from his years of ministry at the *Metropolitan Tabernacle* in London, England:

Some three years ago I was talking with an aged minister, and he began fumbling about in his waistcoat pocket, but he was a long while before he found what he wanted. At last he brought out a letter that was well nigh worn to pieces, and he said, "God Almighty bless you! God Almighty bless you!" And I said, "Friend what is it?" He said, "I had a son—I thought he would be the stay [support] of my old age, but he disgraced himself, and he went away from me, and I could not tell where he went, only he said he was going to America. He took a ticket to sail for America from the London Docks, but he did not go on the particular day he expected."

This aged minister bade me read the letter, and I read it, and it was like this: "Father, I am here in America. I have found a situation [employment], and God has

prospered me. I write to ask your forgiveness for the thousand wrongs that I have done you, and the grief I caused you, for, blessed be God, I have found the Savior. I have joined a church here and hope to spend my life in God's service. It happened thus: I did not sail for America the day I expected. I went down to the *Tabernacle* to see what it was like, and God met with me. Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Perhaps there is a runaway son here. The Lord call him by His grace.' And He did!"

"Now" said he, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket, "that son of mine is dead, and he is in heaven, and I love you, and I shall do so as long as I live, because you were the means of bringing him to Christ."²

While some may conclude that Onesimus ended up in Rome by chance, Paul seems to suggest it was according to the providence of God when he says to Philemon: "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever" (vs. 15). Interestingly, the apostle tells us Onesimus *departed*, but he does not give us the sordid details of his sinful ways, which were best left unsaid. A good lesson for us to remember!

As Onesimus made his way to Rome he apparently came under deep conviction of his sin. He may have had his liberty, but he was still in bondage to his sins. Unable to function with the heavy burden he was carrying, he recalled that the saints at Colosse had been praying for the Apostle Paul who was a prisoner at Rome. Therefore, he may well have

sought out the apostle. Whatever the case, Paul had an opportunity to lead Onesimus to the Lord (vs. 10). He was wonderfully saved by the grace of God! Grace reached down and unshackled him from the burden of his sins.

Centuries later, John Newton, that once old wretched slave trader who was also saved by grace, wrote a hymn to which each of us former Onesimi can surely relate:

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

"I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."

HOW GRACE CHANGES US

Although some seem to think that grace gives us a license to sin, quite the opposite is true. It teaches us to *deny* ungodliness and to live righteously in this present evil age. The actions of both Paul and his new convert illustrate this—grace changes lives. Like anyone who comes to Christ, Onesimus looked back on his past life with regret. Clearly he had shared with the apostle how he had wronged his master (vs. 11 & 18). A life touched by grace is always characterized by *honesty*. It was now his desire to set the record straight with Philemon in spite of the consequences, but how to accomplish this was another matter.

Here the apostle intercedes for his new friend. He could have merely instructed Onesimus to return home, throw himself on the mercy of his master and pay restitution. But instead Paul acts in accordance with the mind of Christ. He offers to pay the debt on behalf of Onesimus. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought,

put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it” (vs. 18 & 19). That’s grace! Grace is acting on behalf of another who is unworthy and undeserving. If Onesimus got what he rightfully deserved, he probably would have been put to death, or at the very least endured hard bondage the rest of his days.

But Paul makes a compelling argument to Philemon. “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds” (vs. 10). The law commanded, “this do and thou shalt live,” but grace beseeches—I beg you! Philemon forgive Onesimus for the wrong he has done, “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). Then the apostle adds:

“Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly” (vs. 13 & 14).

Paul could have reasoned that the slate of Onesimus was wiped clean; therefore, I will use him here at Rome to minister to my needs. Think how much more I will be able to accomplish in the Lord’s work if I retain him. Surely Philemon will understand! But Paul valued the fellowship of Philemon far too much to take advantage of him. The apostle knew that Onesimus was the property of his friend, thus he would allow him the courtesy of making that decision. You see, grace always does what is *right*.

It literally takes years and years to earn the respect of others,

but it can all be destroyed in a moment of time. This is why it is so essential to maintain a consistent godly testimony, as exhibited by the apostle. In his book, *Ten Mistakes Parents Make with Teenagers*, Jay Kesler describes a conversation he had with a young lady at a *Youth for Christ* summer camp:

This particular camp was in Ohio and after one of the services some kids came forward, but one young woman was having a difficult time so the counselors asked me if I would speak to her. We sat down in the front row of the Chapel, and through many tears her heartbreaking story began to unfold. She’d been molested by her father since she was four years old. She had never told anyone about this and carried a great sense of guilt, as though she were to blame for her father’s actions.

As she told me her story, I noticed that both of her wrists were scarred. (If you work with youth today, you see these marks often.) “Tell me about your wrists,” I said. “Well, I tried to kill myself.” “Why didn’t you do it?” I asked. Killing yourself is a relatively simple thing if you really want to do it. If it is just a bid for attention, the attempt is usually feeble. She said, “Well, I got to thinking...we have a youth pastor at our church....”

Oh no, I thought, now I’m going to hear an ugly story about her getting involved with some youth pastor. But that wasn’t it at all. She said, “He’d just gotten married before he came to our church, and I’ve been watching



him. When he and his wife are standing in line at church he holds her hand. They look at each other affectionately, and they hug each other right in church. One day I was standing in the pastor's study, looking out the window and the youth pastor walked his wife out to the parking lot. Now there was only one car in the parking lot; nobody was around; nobody was looking. And that guy walked all the way around the car and opened the door and let her in. Then he walked all the way around and got in himself. And there was nobody even looking."


That was a nice story, but I couldn't make the connection between that and her problem of incest and suicide. So I asked why this seemed significant to her. She said, "Well, I just got to thinking that all men must not be like my dad, huh?" I said, "You're right. All men are not like your father." "Jay, do you suppose our youth pastor's a Christian?" "Yes," I said, "I think he probably is." "Well that's why I came tonight. I want to be a Christian, too!"

Why did she want to trust Christ and become a Christian? Because she saw a believer being affectionate and respectful to his wife—when he thought no one was looking. That's the power of a consistent life in Christ.³

A FINAL THOUGHT

The love that Paul and Philemon had for each other was mutual. Thus, he beseeches his friend on the basis of "love's sake." This was another opportunity for Philemon to demonstrate his love for the Lord and his apostle. So it is

touching to see how Paul desires that Philemon receive Onesimus as himself. In short, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself" (vs. 17). The grace and kindness you would show to me when I visit, show to our beloved Brother Onesimus. Put him up in the best lodging, give him my seat at your table, and provide for his needs, as you have done so generously for me. Accept him, even as the Father has accepted us in the Beloved. That's grace!

In essence the aged apostle says to Philemon, Onesimus may have departed from you wearing the garments of a runaway, thieving slave, but I am sending him back to you clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, receive him, "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (vs. 16). The gospel transforms lives! Onesimus returned a trusted servant and a steward of the mysteries of God with whom Philemon could now fellowship. As the hymn writer has said, "Grace 'tis a charming sound!" 

Endnotes

1. Pastor Kurth feels that Philemon may have neglected his responsibility to witness to Onesimus, which is certainly a possibility. Either way, the end result is the same, the providence of God was at work (See page 18). May we challenge you to be a Berean (Acts 17:10,11).
2. *Spurgeon's Sermons*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Vol. 10, Page 320.
3. *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories and Illustrations, and Quotes*, by Robert J. Morgan, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, Page 276.

Question Box

“Though a grace believer, one of my brothers recently denounced the medical profession’s ability to help those suffering from mental illnesses. He denounced any form of medication. He said that he believes only our beloved physician, Jesus Christ, could heal such ‘defects of the spirit.’ This man has suffered terribly all his life. Can you tell me please, is this his own belief or one that the BBS would also endorse? He will listen to you and I beg you to enlighten all of us.”

Under the direction of the Spirit, Paul instructed Timothy accordingly:

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (I Tim. 5:23).

Clearly the apostle wanted Timothy to use a little wine for medicinal purposes to ease the problems he was having with his stomach. Also, Paul himself was ministered to by Luke, “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11). In like manner, we should avail ourselves to whatever is at our disposal to address the particular health issues we are facing.

We would highly recommend that your brother seek out medical attention as soon as possible. Many mental disorders are often successfully treated with medication. This should be done in conjunction with the assistance of a godly pastor who can provide spiritual support. The counsel of the Word of God is indispensable at such times. With God’s help, we are confident your brother can live a productive and fruitful life for the Lord.

The apostle says in II Corinthians 1:3:

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies.”

Surely God has been merciful in allowing medical science to understand more fully the complexities of the human body, including the mind, which is a demonstration of His creative genius. Therefore, we believe it is prudent to utilize this mercy to relieve our pain and suffering.

It is true that God is still the Great Physician and sometimes intervenes to heal our infirmities. But today, in the administration of Grace, this is the exception, not the rule. More often than not, His grace is sufficient.

—Pastor Sadler

The Manifestations of True Spirituality

THE OUTWARD EVIDENCES

By Cornelius R. Stam



FAITHFUL TESTIMONY

No truly spiritual believer will lightly allow his fellowman to go to perdition or his brother in Christ to stumble and fall. Even apart from his desire for the good of others, he will long to see his Lord honored in the salvation of the lost and the upbuilding of the saved. Thus it is that the inspired apostle writes with regard to his own testimony:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

“And that *He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (II Cor. 5:14,15).

What an example the apostle himself was in this! He went everywhere *“witnessing both to small and great”* (Acts 26:22). As he committed the Ephesian elders “to God and to the word of His grace,” he could say: *“...remember; that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every-one night and day with tears”*

(Acts 20:31,32) and could challenge them: *“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men”* (Ver. 26). Indeed, despite forebodings of future persecutions he could still say:

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

In all this, let us who would be truly spiritual heed the apostle’s exhortation:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example” (Phil. 3:17).

CONSISTENT BEHAVIOR

But, as we have seen in our discussion of the conflict between the old and new natures,¹ there is more to the Christian walk than merely witnessing to others. The music of a godly life must accompany the testimony of our lips. Not only for our own spiritual good but for the sake of others and for the glory of the Christ who died for us, we must flee from the lusts of the flesh and keep ourselves “unspotted from the world.”

How the Apostle Paul stresses this: *“Walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:4)—*“Walk not after the flesh”* (Rom. 8:4)—*“Walk honestly”*

(Rom. 13:13)—“Walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16)—“Walk worthy of the [calling] wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1)—“Walk not as [the] Gentiles walk” (Eph. 4:17)—“Walk in love” (Eph. 5:2)—“Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8)—“Walk circumspectly” (Eph. 5:15)—“Walk worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10)—“Walk in wisdom” (Col. 4:5).

DILIGENT TOIL

One of the Christian natives in a Congo compound had left the others hoeing the mission gardens and was missing when the missionary appeared. Going in search of him the missionary found him in his hut, reading his New Testament. “What are you doing here while the others are working?” the missionary asked. “I’m trying to get victory,” replied the native.

Too many Christians seem to suppose that a truly spiritual life is made up only of Bible study, prayer, and the singing of hymns. Actually, true Bible study, prayer and thanksgiving will rouse us to give ourselves in lives of toil and self denial for Christ and others.

Our apostle was an example to us in this too. Writing to the Colossians, he says, with respect to his efforts to lead them to spiritual maturity: “Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col. 1:29). And his efforts to win the lost and establish the saved often entailed hard secular labor too, for to the Thessalonians he

writes: “Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God” (I Thes. 2:9). Indeed, this often meant working physically with his hands, for to the Ephesian elders he said: “Ye, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me” (Acts 20:34). In other words, he worked with his hands to support both himself and his co-workers. And while he did not consider this to be the ideal procedure, he did not feel



himself too important to do it when necessary, even though “not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.” To the Corinthian believers he writes: “Even unto this present hour we...labor, working with our own hands” (I Cor. 4:11,12).

This is an important phase of the truly spiritual life which is often overlooked. Those who can sing and pray and testify so heartily are often slow to offer their services when there is work to be done. Yes, even ministers of the gospel and leaders in Christian work are often delinquent in performing the tasks that properly go with their ministry. They seem to feel that the Holy Spirit should prosper their work if they only study the Word and pray.

The Apostle Paul was not too lazy or too proud to work, with his hands if necessary, and untiringly in any case, to reach greater numbers with the message committed

to him. Comparing himself with other “ministers of Christ” he could honestly say: *“in labors more abundant”* (II Cor. 11:23).

If we would be truly spiritual, then, we should heed his exhortation to the Corinthians and to us, to be *“always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Cor. 15:58).

SACRIFICIAL GIVING

Another manifestation of true spirituality is sacrificial giving for the Lord’s sake. It is true that carnal Christians and even unbelievers are sometimes generous with their resources. It is also true that we must obey I Timothy 5:8 and provide for our households, but it is *not* true that a truly spiritual believer will be stingy with the wealth that God has entrusted to him. Invariably the healthiest churches, spiritually, are the most generous contributors to the work of the Lord. Yet, alas, how few of God’s people, proportionately, have come to know the joy of making financial *sacrifices* for the Lord’s sake!

The Philippians knew this joy. Poor as these godly people were in this world’s goods, they sought Paul out again and again to minister to his needs and to help with the work of the Lord, sometimes urging him to accept what they could ill afford to give (Phil. 4:15, 16; II Cor. 8:3). And this they did in a better way than Paul had hoped, first giving *themselves* to Paul and to the Lord (II Cor. 8:5).

With the carnal Corinthians this was not so. Probably the largest of all the churches founded by

“God is a generous
and sacrificial Giver.

*“He...spared not His
own Son, but delivered
Him up for us all’...”*

Paul, they did not even bear the apostle’s meagre living expenses (II Cor. 11:9). Indeed, while at Corinth, the apostle was supported by the poor Macedonians!

Paul had to remind the Corinthians of the generosity of the Macedonians (especially the Philippians) to provoke them to emulation, lest the Macedonians should put them to shame (II Cor. 8:8; 9:4) when all the other churches presented their contributions for the “poor saints” of Judea. He had to send Titus to stir up among them the grace of giving (II Cor. 8:6). He had to remind them how the Son of God had given His *all* and had become *poor* to make *them rich* (II Cor. 8:9). He had to remind them that they had promised to do their part a year before, exhorting them: *“Now therefore perform the doing of it”* (II Cor. 8:10,11). He had to challenge them: *“prove the sincerity of your love”* (II Cor. 8:8).

These Corinthians had the Pentecostal gifts, yet they were far from spiritual. The apostle called them “carnal” and “babes” (I Cor. 3:1). They had not shown due appreciation to God for His goodness to them. They had not accepted their responsibilities toward Christ and their brethren. How could they be called spiritual? True, they had much enthusiasm, even disorder, in their services

(I Cor. 14:26-28,33,40) but can one be called spiritual who *knows* that God so loved the world that He *gave—gave His very best, His beloved Son*, to save him from sin, yet is not in turn moved to offer himself and his goods to God? Can one be considered spiritual who *knows* that the Lord of glory became poor—*so poor*—that we might be rich, yet is not touched to make sacrifices for Him and for those for whom He died?

We have known Christian people who have labored industriously as a sort of substitute for giving, but this will not do. God is a generous and *sacrificial* Giver. “*He...spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all*” and even now, “*with Him also freely gives us all things*” (Rom. 8:32). And will not those who are truly spiritual partake of His nature? Thus diligent toil and sacrificial giving *both* go with true spirituality, for the Spirit Himself, who exhorts us to be “*always abounding in the work of the Lord*,” also exhorts, with respect to giving: “*See that ye abound in this grace also*” (II Cor. 8:7) and:

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

Let those of us who have not yet entered into the joy and fellowship of sacrificial giving begin *now*, knowing that “*God loveth a cheerful [Lit., joyful] giver*” (II Cor. 9:7).

HEARTFELT WORSHIP

Actually, worship is both an inward and an outward manifestation of true spirituality.

Strangely, the Pauline epistles seldom use the word *worship* itself, yet have a great deal to say about it and afford many examples of it. Always true worship goes hand in hand with true spirituality. Thus the apostle exhorts:


“...be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18,19).

We cannot here go into the many doxologies—all expressions of worship—found in the epistles, or the many other exclamations of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise found in these writings. Varied as they are, each one is a manifestation of true spirituality. We cite a few examples:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in [the heavenlies] in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

“...the Son of God...loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

“...I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Phil. 1:3).

Surely, while we fail to witness for Christ, or to live or toil or sacrifice for Him—and certainly, while our hearts remain unmoved to worship Him, it is idle to talk of being spiritual. As we bring this study to a close, then, let each of us ask God that by His grace we may bear the fruit of the Spirit and manifest the results of His presence within. 

Endnote

1. For a more comprehensive study on the Christian life, please see Pastor Stam's book entitled *True Spirituality* from which this excerpt was taken.

Satan's Devices

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

(A message from the *Grace Singles Conference*, December 30, 2002)

An old joke describes how hostile Indians once surrounded the Lone Ranger and his faithful Indian companion Tonto. "It looks like we're really in for it this time, Tonto!" said the Lone Ranger. To which Tonto replied, "What do you mean 'we,' Kemo-sabi?"

I think of this joke every time I read II Corinthians 2:11:

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Whenever I read this verse, I feel like asking, "What do you mean 'we,' Paul?" Most Christians are *terribly* ignorant of Satan's devices, *especially* the *specific* device being used by Satan in the context here.

The Corinthians had failed to excommunicate a fornicator from their midst (I Cor. 5:1,2), evidently feeling proud of the liberty to sin they thought they enjoyed under grace. Paul's words in the first Corinthian epistle so shamed them that they proceeded to put the man out of the assembly—but then another problem arose. After the fornicator repented, they refused to let him back in! Thus the *specific* Satanic device that Paul is warning us about in this context is *extremism*. First they were too permissive, then they were too strict!

Examples of extremism in Christianity abound. The Corinthians were too carnal, but the Galatians were too legalistic. Some husbands fail to accept their God-given role as head of the home, while others take headship too far and become abusive tyrants. Some fathers discipline their children too little, some too much.



Extremism even affects our Bible study. Some Christians don't take the Bible literally, but others take it *too* literally, refusing to allow God the right to use figures of speech, as when the Lord said, "This is my body" (Matt. 26:26). Some believers don't rightly divide the Word at all, while our Acts 28

brethren divide it too much. Finally, some of our grace brethren seem to be saying that God is not intervening in our lives today, but this too is taking things too far.

As dispensationalists we know that God will not part the Red Sea for us, feed us with manna from heaven, or preserve us alive and unharmed in a burning fiery furnace, as He did in time past. But,

while God no longer intervenes in our lives in this overt manner, He is still active behind the scenes, as He was in the Book of Esther.

God's name is not even mentioned in Esther, but His providential work in the background is unmistakable. In Esther 3, a wicked man named Haman rose to a position of power in the kingdom of Persia (3:1). When a Jew named Mordecai refused to bow to him (v. 2), Haman was enraged, and determined to slay *all* the Jews (v. 5,6). He convinced the king to send out a letter to the remote corners of the kingdom, ordering the extermination of all Jews on an appointed day (v. 13).

What was God to do? The answer is, He had *already* done something about this. God had worked providentially in Chapters 1 and 2 to oust the former queen and replace her with Mordecai's cousin Esther. As we can now look back and clearly see, God had worked in advance to place a Jewess in a

“...God works in the background rather than the foreground of our lives...”

position of influence so that she might be firmly in place in the palace, ready to oppose this perilous threat before it even materialized. God had not *caused* the king's drunkenness (Esther 1:10), nor the former queen's disobedience to her husband that led to her divorce (1:12), but He was able to work *with* their sin to bring about His purposes (cf. Ps. 76:10).

The only question was: would Esther *use* her influence to save her people? When Mordecai begged her to intervene (Esther 4:7,8), she explained that to do so would endanger her own life (v. 9-11). Her cousin then responded to this excuse with a remarkable statement of faith:

“...if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place...” (v. 14).

Mordecai is so confident in God's ability to work behind the scenes, he tells her that God will somehow manage to save Israel with or without her. But then he waxes philosophical and says,

“...who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (v. 14).

Mordecai *thought* he saw the hand of God in Esther's ascension to the throne, but he couldn't be *sure*, for God was not speaking audibly to those dispersed Jews at that time.

And this is precisely our situation today. As God works in the background rather than the foreground of our lives, we too *think* we see God's hand at work in a given circumstance, but we can't be *sure*, for God is not speaking audibly to us either. But there is something

that Paul says in the Book of Philemon that assures us that He is at work amongst us just as surely, and in the same manner, as He was in the days of Esther.

The Book of Philemon concerns a slave named Onesimus who ran away from a Christian slave-owner named Philemon, only to meet up with the Apostle Paul and get saved (Philemon 10-12). As Paul returned this slave to his master, he too waxes philosophical and writes to Philemon:

“For perhaps he [Onesimus] therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever” (Philemon 15).

Like Mordecai, Paul *thought* he saw the hand of God in the events surrounding Onesimus, but he couldn't be *sure*. But these words of the apostle of grace, which so remind us of the words of Mordecai, teach us that God is working today under grace in the same way that He worked in Mordecai's day.

Now we must pause here to emphasize that God did not make Onesimus run away, for this was a sin (Col. 3:22), and God never causes any man to sin. But we know from the Old Testament story of Joseph that God is able to work *with* the sins of men to accomplish His purposes. Joseph's brethren envied him, hated him, and sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:4,8,11,28), but God was able to work with these sins to save Abraham's seed from the famine that He had foreseen (Gen. 41:29,30; 50:20).

We cannot understand how God is able to work this way any more than we can understand how God worked when He made Joseph a type of Christ. Joseph and the people around him simply lived their lives, making innumerable free choices and adult decisions. Yet through it all God worked to create well over a hundred types of Christ. How did God accomplish this? We don't know. But whenever God touches man, there is an element of mystery involved that we cannot explain. For instance, we cannot explain how Christ could be fully God and fully man, yet we believe this to be so. Neither can we understand how the Bible was written by men, but also by God, yet we believe this too to be the case. Nor can we explain how the men surrounding Joseph made decisions based on their own selfish interests, yet their countless decisions combined to make Joseph a type of Christ in so many ways.

In much the same way, God considers believers today to be adult sons (Gal. 4:7), and as such expects us to make intelligent decisions based on His Word as we react to the decisions of those about us and the circumstances that present themselves in our lives. Yet somehow God is able to work through it all to accomplish His purposes. We can see this illustrated in the way that God accomplishes His most basic of purposes today, His will that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4).

Our understanding of God's providential working today vitally affects our understanding of how God gets the gospel to men who want to hear and believe it. Romans 1:19,20 declare that unbelievers are "without excuse" as to knowing about the existence of God, but this knowledge is not enough to save them. However, when a benighted soul in a primitive land responds favorably to the witness of Creation, God then works providentially to get the gospel to him. A missionary just starting out makes a free choice as to his field of service, but God



has worked through him to get the gospel to the far-away man who wants to hear and believe it. Since there aren't enough missionaries to reach all men, God cannot leave all this to chance.

We know that this is how God worked in Old Testament times because of Psalm 25:12,14:

“What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.”

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant.”

Here David explains how in his day, if a man feared the Lord, God would show him His covenant—and the covenant was the means of salvation in that day.


We know that this is also how God works today from the example of Onesimus. Did you ever wonder why this slave ran away from a *believing* master? Evidently Philemon had not shared Christ with Onesimus so God worked with the slave's disobedience to get him to someone who would.

This explanation of God's providential working in our day is the only one that leaves the unbeliever who never hears the gospel "without excuse" at the Great White Throne of judgment. God will simply remind him that he and all other men heard the witness of the stars, for "there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Ps. 19:1-3). The unbeliever will then have only himself to blame for rejecting this testimony, the acceptance of which would have initiated a sequence of events on God's part that would have brought him the gospel.

God's providential work in getting the gospel to would-be believers proves that His direct involvement in our lives did not cease once the transition to the dispensation of Grace was complete. While other examples of God's intervention in even Paul's latest epistles might be viewed as the last examples of a transitional period, the need to get the gospel to willing souls is a need that has continued throughout the dispensation. We can only conclude from this that if the *need* for God's

intervention continues throughout the dispensation, then the providential *means* by which God gets the gospel to men must also be continuing to function throughout our dispensation.

But, if God is working behind the scenes today, how can we be sure what He is doing in any given circumstance in our life? The answer is, we *cannot*. If even *Paul* couldn't be sure of what God was doing in Philemon 15, surely we cannot. What then should we do? We can only determine to be faithful to the revealed will of God in any given situation, as did Paul.

And what happens if we don't? Then "enlargement and deliverance" shall arise "from another place." But, like Mordecai, we should ask ourselves in any given situation, "Who knows whether I am come to this situation for such a time as this?" It is a blessed truth that, while God would delight to use us, He doesn't need us. But He needs *somebody*. Why not determine to be the person that God can use to bring salvation and a knowledge of the truth to those who so desperately need it? God providentially places all of us in positions where we can be used of Him. The only question is, as it was with Esther, will we *use* our position of influence to serve Him? While Esther feared for her life, we just fear that people won't like us! God help us to have the spiritual fortitude to overcome our fears and live for Him. 

"God providentially places all of us in positions where we can be used of Him."

"Know Thyself?"



Know myself? No—
I want to know my Lord.

Not knowing me,
But knowing Thee
Can set me free.

Know my own heart? God forbid!
For in it depths of sin are hid.

In Thee alone is Liberty.
For Christ Himself hath made me free!

—Virginia B. Willson

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:10).

Preaching Christ and Him Crucified

Northern Indiana Regional Meetings

Date: Saturday, April 26, 2003

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I-94 & US 421
Michigan City, Indiana

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Casey Groeneveld of *Have Bible Will Travel*, Muskegon, MI
Ricky Kurth, Pastor of *Faith Bible Church*, Steger, IL
Paul M. Sadler, President of *Berean Bible Society*, Milwaukee, WI

For directions and additional information, please contact:

Mr. Jerry Sterchi at (219) 326-8705
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Paul M. Sadler, President of *Berean Bible Society*
Tim Stonecipher, Pastor of *Grace Life Fellowship*

For directions and additional information, please contact:

Pastor Tim Stonecipher at (270) 554-0808
or e-mail: stonecipher6@cs.com

***May God richly bless these meetings
to the praise of His glory in Christ Jesus!***

Declaring the Riches of His Grace

Ontario Spring Bible Conference

Dates: May 16-18, 2003

Location: *Beacon of Grace Bible Church*
Woodland Public School
1511 Seventh Street
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Speaker: Pastor Ricky Kurth, *Berean Bible Society*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Theme: *Christian Living in the Dispensation of Grace*

For additional information, please contact:

Pastor Bill Petri at (716) 895-5204
or e-mail: beaconofgrace@aol.com

All are welcome! And don't forget to bring a friend!

Midwest Grace Fellowship 15th Annual Spring Bible Conference

Dates: Friday, May 30th thru Sunday, June 1st, 2003

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Pastor Dave Wilson
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Kevin Heyle, Bible Teacher
Ric Jennings, Bible Teacher

Theme: *Christ in You, The Hope of Glory*

For additional information, please contact:

Dan Heyle (660) 425-6853 or
Gene Tucker (816) 741-7835

Smokey Mountain Bible Conference

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119 S. Washington Street
Hendersonville, North Carolina

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Pastor Curt Crist
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For more information, please contact:
Pastor Curt Crist at (828) 685-2243
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President of *Berean Bible Society*, Milwaukee, WI

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Teens: Kevin Sadler, Staff Member at *Berean Bible Society*

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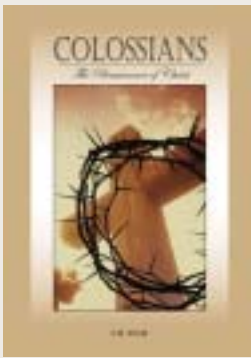
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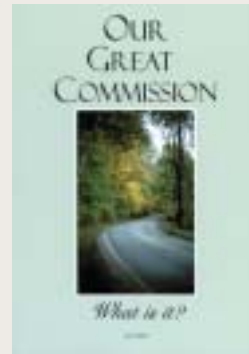
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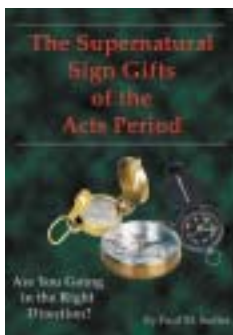
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"Thank you for 'carrying' me so faithfully these last few years. I found the BBS website as a link from another ministry and it has been an answer to prayer. We have left three mainstream denominations over the last 40 years because of their worldly teaching. And since there are no Grace churches in our area, your publication has been a tremendous help and is very important in our home Bible study. Please be assured I will be a regular contributor in the coming months."

From Pennsylvania:

"Thank you so much for the *Berean Searchlight* and other publications which challenge us to get into the Word."

From Idaho:

"We have enjoyed printing your *Two Minutes with the Bible* on the front page of our weekly newspaper for many years. As we begin 2003, we realize that we have just enough of your articles to run the first three weeks. Do you still write them and if you do, could you send us a supply?" (The Pony Express is heading west as we speak! If you would like to see *Two Minutes* in your local newspaper, simply contact Pastor Russ Miller here at BBS for the details. Ed.)

From Virginia:

"Thank so much for the book, *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, by Brother Stam. Your literature has blessed me in understanding God's Word over the last year. Please send me Acts, Volume 2."

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"We thank you for the effort you make to preserve and perpetuate the Gospel. I am continually disappointed and alarmed to see the compromises and distortions that so many churches and ministers are participating in. We have been financial supporters of several good ministries who now (it is becoming more clear) are not holding true to the faith. They are putting man's business ahead of God's business. God willing, we will support your work more faithfully in years to come."

From Florida:

"Does the *Berean Searchlight* come in a large print version? My husband has eye problems. Thank you and you have our prayers." (Not at this time, but if you have access to the internet you can download the *Searchlight* from our website and then simply enlarge the size in your "printer options" before printing it out. Ed.)

From Tennessee:

"I look forward every month to receiving the *Searchlight*. I especially enjoyed the teaching by Pastor Ken Lawson on the *Confession of Sins* in this month's (January 2003) issue. I have always struggled with the preaching I have heard on I John 1:1-10. I am looking forward to next month's continuation of this portion of Scripture."

From Colorado:

"I'm enjoying your series on *The Judgment Seat of Christ* and am sharing this with others beginning with the December 2002 issue. Please send me 24 extra copies of your January 2003 issue of the *Searchlight*. Also, please start a monthly subscription for my cousin who showed some interest in some of the articles I sent to him."

From Michigan:

“I just started going to a Bible Study that teaches rightly dividing the Word and Paul’s teachings. It is like a light has been turned on and now I can see clearly.”

From Illinois:

“I am grateful for your wonderful ministry. You have helped me so often when I feel downtrodden. I can hardly wait for the next new *Searchlight* to come. The first day I read it from cover to cover. Then I pick it up so often.”

From Kentucky:

“I am writing to let you know how much I appreciate you and all you do. Since I opened my store, you all have graciously sent me 30 copies a month of the *Berean Searchlight* so I can pass them out to my customers. Being able to pass out these books to people is my way of ministering in our community. I have had the pleasure to discuss what I believe and give them literature to take with them so they can read for themselves the good news.” (Thanks for helping to get the message out to others. Ed.)

From Colorado:

“I would appreciate it if you would place my name on your mailing list for the *Berean Searchlight*. If possible, I would like to begin with the January 2003 issue. There was an article by Ken Lawson entitled, *The Confession of Sins*, that I found very enlightening and would like to have the complete article.”

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“Late (in our giving) again! Thank the Lord we’re not late in learning about the truth for today as given to us by the Apostle Paul. Each day makes us more and more appreciative of the liberty we have in Jesus Christ. Our prayers are with you constantly and we are ‘watching thereunto’ to see how they are being answered. God bless and keep you to ‘stand fast.’” (Watching in prayer is indeed Pauline—Col. 4:2,3. Ed.)

From Florida:

“I have been studying the Word, rightly divided, for a couple of years now with help from Mr. Stam and Mr. Sadler’s writings. Also, from earlier writers that God used to help bring the truth to ‘light.’ I pray the Lord helps me to share with others what He has enlightened me to understand in the Scriptures.”

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“Here is a gift to use wherever needed. May God open the hearts of His believers to provide the needed funds so that you may continue to spread the Word, rightly divided. Please add my daughter and her husband to the *Searchlight* mailing list.”

From Illinois:

“Please use the enclosed gift to support publication, printing and mailing expenses. I praise and thank God for your steadfast work in His service and in disseminating the Word, rightly divided. It’s a pleasure and a privilege to be able to contribute to your ministry.”

“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

Why Was Paul So Zealous?

II Corinthians 5:14,15

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.
Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

“And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (II Cor. 5:14,15).

Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles was at one time extremely zealous in his persecution of those Jews who believed in Jesus Christ as Israel's promised Messiah. As a devout Jew, he sought to protect the honor of God by forcing those whom he believed had departed from the law of Moses to recant. He was willing not only to put them in prison if necessary, but to put them to death if the situation warranted it (see Acts 7:54-8:1; 9:1,2; note, the young man called *Saul* later became the Apostle Paul).

But, in a miraculous way, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus and commissioned him to carry a message of forgiveness of sins to the Gentiles (Acts 26:12-18).

To this man, who was directing the persecution (war) against God's Anointed One, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself revealed God's mystery (secret) program of grace. By special revelation Paul was given the Dispensation of the Grace of God. He became God's steward or agent in charge of dispensing or administering His program of grace to the world (see Gal. 1:11,12; Eph. 3:1-9; Col. 1:24-26).

Paul's misplaced zeal for persecuting those who followed Christ was based on his self-righteous pride which had its roots in his being a religious Jew, one of God's chosen people. But, when he understood the truth of grace, he considered all that he had counted profitable before as worthless dung (Phil. 3:1-9). His zeal was now directed to proclaiming God's grace and love toward those who do not deserve it. His statement in II Corinthians 5:14 explains his motivation to relentlessly proclaim the Grace of God: “For the love of Christ constrains us.” Knowing the love of God in Christ Jesus should cause us to be as zealous for the Gospel of Grace as Paul was.


Don't Forget! Fall Semester begins August 25, 2003.

For more information about *Berean Bible Institute*, please contact: Dr. W. Edward Bedore, PO Box 40, Germantown, WI 53022, or phone: (262) 255-4094, fax: (262) 255-4195, e-mail: berean@execpc.com.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW ASSEMBLY: The *Grace Bible Church* of St. Cloud, Minnesota would like to extend a warm invitation to those who live in the area to join them in worship. The assembly meets every Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. at *North Junior High* (in the little theater) on 12th Street, North St. Cloud, MN. For directions, please contact: Toby or Jennifer Schnobrich (320) 656-0554 or e-mail: kershnudle@charter.net. God's very best to these dear saints as they make known the riches of His grace.

CLARIFICATION: In the January issue of the *Berean Searchlight* (page 6) we inadvertently stated that "both were overlaid with gold," referring to the Mercy seat and the Ark of the Covenant. While the Ark of the Covenant was indeed overlaid with gold, the Mercy Seat was different—it was made of pure gold (Ex. 25:17; 37:6). The Mercy Seat foreshadowed *propitiation* through Christ's shed blood, which is a Divine work throughout. Hence it was made of solid gold!

 **TO OUR CANADIAN FRIENDS:** If you plan to give a donation to the ministries of the *Berean Bible Society*, we would like to encourage you to channel it through BBS Canada. John Peters, the President of BBS Canada, will see that you receive a receipt for tax purposes. Our Canadian address is: *Berean Bible Society*, 54940 Light Lane, R.R. #1, Vienna, Ontario N0J 1Z0.

In addition, you can order BBS books and booklets through our Canadian office which eliminates the currency exchange and lengthy delays waiting for your order from the States. Heartfelt thanks to our northern co-workers who faithfully help us spread the good news of Paul's apostleship and message.

THE LIGHTHOUSE PICTURE that appears on the front cover this month was taken by James Rasmussen of Mount Prospect, Illinois. James is a professional photographer who has traveled extensively around the world in search of the perfect picture. It is an understatement to say that his gallery is impressive. If you would like to visit Mr. Rasmussen's website, he can be reached at: www.razfoto.com.

*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was taken by Mr. James Rasmussen (see above). The *Key West Lighthouse* is located in Key West, Florida. Known as "A Beacon at the Corner of America," this light station was built after the hurricane of 1846 destroyed the original tower on the coast. It is 86 feet high and is the 15th oldest surviving lighthouse in the country.

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