

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

January 2014



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From the President's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

It has been said that “when Raphael died at thirty-seven years of age, they carried his marvelous painting, ‘The Transfiguration,’ only half finished, in the funeral procession as a symbol of the incompleteness of life and the brevity of time.”

Time is a precious commodity! When the Apostle Paul instructed the Ephesians to *redeem the time*, he wanted them to make wise use of it. They were not to squander it on worldly pursuits that would draw them away from the things of the Lord. But redeeming the time also implies taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves in life. When Paul, for example, was unjustly incarcerated at Rome, he did not view his circumstances as a setback in his ministry, but as an opportunity for the furtherance of the gospel. It gave him access to Caesar’s household that he would not have otherwise had. And as a result, many were saved.

Rather than dwell on his mitigating circumstances that would have only frustrated the grace of God, Paul instead chose to produce what is perhaps his greatest body of work—his Prison Epistles that continue to minister to the Body of Christ to this very day. This is why it is important to follow Paul’s example, that we too might be more productive in the Lord’s service. His unfaltering love and devotion to the Savior, Who saved him on the road to Damascus, was the motivating influence in his life, as it should be in ours.

As you read these lines, there will be numerous opportunities throughout the coming year to make a difference in someone’s life. But it is essential to take advantage of them as Paul did. Perhaps it’s a neighbor down the street who needs a helping hand. Reach out to them, as the Lord reached out to us; and when you do, take the gospel with you. Become a mentor to someone who is new to the faith, someone who has more questions than answers about the Word of God. Make a difference in someone’s life. Only eternity will bear out the fruits of your labor for Christ. You will be amazed when you get to Glory and someone walks up to you and says, “Thank you for the word of encouragement that day, it was a turning point in my Christian life.”

May God help us to live every day in light of the Judgment Seat of Christ, where we will all stand astounded at what could have been.

Yours in His redeeming love,
Paul M. Sadler, President

The background of the top half of the page is a photograph of a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow. There are some clouds in the sky. In the distance, on a dark silhouette of a hill, there are three crosses. The title "God's Unconditional Love" is written in a white, stylized font over the top half of the image.

God's Unconditional Love

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

"But God commendeth [directed] His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

We often hear couples speak of their love for one another after years of marriage, but there is a greater and deeper love—the love of God. The above is perhaps one of the most profound verses in the Word of God. It is amazing when we consider that God has directed His love toward us. But in what way did He do so? The answer is found in the very next statement: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In other words, when we were in total rebellion against God, dead in trespasses and sins, and shouting profanities in the face of God out of hatred for Him, God intervened to provide a way of salvation. In *unconditional love*, He sent His Son, the Son of His love, to die for His enemies—you and me!

God has made a provision for *all*, but only those who place their faith in the finished work Christ at Calvary will be saved from their sins. You see, God will not accept your good works for salvation. The Word of God could not be clearer on the matter: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). Perhaps you are wondering: "What must I do to be saved?" It is simply this: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He died for your sins, and rose again (I Cor. 15:3,4). The moment you trust Christ as your personal Savior, all of your sins will be forgiven, and God will grant you the free gift of eternal life.

God loves you; Christ died to save you; what more could He do for you? Trust Him today before it's too late. Believe me when I say, you do not want to leave this life without Christ. To do so will leave you with an eternity of regret, because there are no second chances beyond the veil of death—it's now or never! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God will save you wonderfully by His grace. But the good news does not end here; He will also give you a new life in Christ!

The background of the top half of the page is a photograph of the Israeli flag, which features two horizontal blue stripes and a white Star of David in the center. The flag is waving in the wind. Behind the flag, a stone wall with a dark, arched opening, resembling a tomb entrance, is visible.

The Spiritual Resurrection of a Nation

(Cont'd)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

One of the many proofs that God has not cast the nation of Israel away forever is found in the account of the raising of Lazarus. Last month we saw that his resurrection was a type of Israel's future resurrection from the spiritual death in which she has lain for nearly 2,000 years now, and with this article we offer further proof that God is not yet through with His favored nation.

The Lord's Delay

"Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him" (John 11:30). This delay in the Lord's coming to raise Lazarus typifies the delay in the Lord's coming to raise Israel, a delay that we often see symbolized in Scripture. For instance, when the Lord "constrained His disciples to get into the ship" (Mark 6:45), that was a picture of how He was about to send them sailing into the Tribulation that would have come had

the dispensation of grace not interrupted the prophetic program. After He put them on the ship, "He departed into a mountain to pray" (v. 46), a picture of how, after He sent the apostles heading toward the Tribulation, He died and rose and ascended into the *heavenly* mountain (Heb. 12:22) to pray for them (Heb. 9:24).

After that, the Tribulation was supposed to break out, a stormy time that we see pictured when we read that "when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea...and He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them" (Mark 6:47,48). The wind is often associated with "the prince of the power of the *air*" (Eph. 2:2), and this wind was blowing *hard*. The ship left at even, and the Jewish evening began at 6 p.m. They rowed until "about the fourth watch of the night," which began *nine hours later*. And remember, these were burly fishermen who knew how to row a

boat! Of course, this storm had to be bad to typify the worst time of trouble the world will ever know (Matt. 24:21).

When the Lord finally appeared to save them, right before dawn, it symbolized a delay in the Lord's Second Coming. The Lord knew they were struggling, rowing hard for hours; yet He purposely delayed going to help them, just



as He purposely delayed going to help Lazarus. The Lord will likewise know that Israel will be struggling in the Tribulation, yet He will purposely delay His coming then as well.

Meanwhile, the apostles no doubt knew that the Lord would come to help them, but after nine hours, they probably began to wonder, "How long will He make us wait?" This pictures how Tribulation saints will know that the Lord will return to help them, as the prophets foretold, but they will no doubt be asking, "O Lord, how long? *Return*, O Lord, deliver my soul" (Psa. 13:1,2 cf. 35:17, etc.). His return will seem to take forever; it will feel as if the Lord doesn't care about them, just as we see pictured in another storm (Mark 5:36-38).

In these types, the Tribulation *starts* in the evening, when the

light goes away. Christ was the light of the world (John 8:12), but only as long as He was in the world (John 9:5). When He left, the evening started and the darkness began. That's when the Tribulation would have started, and will start someday. Without the light of the world, it will be a time of darkness (Joel 2:1,2).

The Sign of the Son of Man

Then, in the *middle* of the Tribulation, something will happen, symbolized by the parable in which "*at midnight* there was a cry made, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*" (Matt. 25:6). In the middle of the Tribulation, something will happen that will make men say, "Christ is returning." What could it be?

We believe this cry will go up when "the sign of the Son of man" appears "in heaven" (Matt. 24:30). How will men see this sign if it is in heaven? Well, as you may know the Bible speaks of three heavens: the first, in which birds fly (Gen. 1:23); the second, where "the stars of heaven" shine (Gen. 26:4, etc.), and "the third heaven" (II Cor. 12:2), which is the Paradise where God dwells (v. 4). In the middle of the Tribulation, God plans to roll up the second heaven (Rev. 6:14), which will allow men to look right into the third heaven and see "Him that sitteth on the throne" (Rev. 6:16). This will be the sign of the Son of man in heaven. When that happens, the cry will go up, "The Bridegroom cometh—I *can see Him!*"

Yet when does He come? At midnight, in the middle of the Tribulation, when the cry goes up? No, in the fourth watch of the

night, toward dawn, at the *end* of the Tribulation. This is why we read of His Second Coming that “the Sun of righteousness” shall “arise” (Mal. 4:2). But if the saints will be able to see the Lord from the middle of the Tribulation on through to the end, imagine their frustration when He delays His coming! No wonder they will cry, “How long?”

The Unsaved

If you are wondering what *unbelievers* will be doing in that day, we see this pictured in John 11:31. The unbelieving Jews who came to mourn the death of Lazarus are typical of unbelieving Jews in the Tribulation who will be mourning the virtual death of their nation for the past 2,000 years, that is, how God no longer works miracles on their behalf as He did in time past. But you’ll remember we said that God does not approve when the nation is mourned if she is suffering because of her sins (Jer. 16:5).

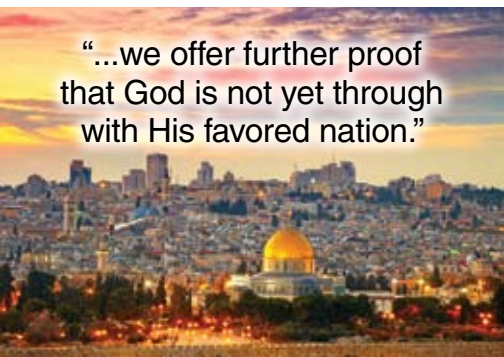
the kingdom will naturally follow resurrected saints like Abraham and David, to hear what they have to say.

And what they have to say is pictured here when Mary said to the Lord, “if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32). She wasn’t complaining. She knew it wasn’t His fault that He wasn’t there when Lazarus died. The messenger she sent to tell Him that Lazarus was sick didn’t reach Him in time. This is a picture of how, when the Lord raises the kingdom saints from the dead, they will look at the state of the nation and say to the Lord, as it were, “If you had been here, the nation wouldn’t have lain dead for 2,000 years.” They won’t be complaining. They’ll know it isn’t His fault that the nation crucified Him, and that He wasn’t around to help Israel for 2,000 years.

As we move on in the story, we see Mary weeping with these unbelieving Jews (John 11:33), a picture of how, when the Lord returns, *everyone* in Israel will be weeping and mourning (Zech. 12:10-14), believers as well as unbelievers. We read that when the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven, “then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn” (Matt. 24:30). Unbelievers will mourn in fear, of course, and believers will mourn that their nation had crucified their Messiah.

The Lord’s Prayers

As Israel mourns, the Lord will be in heaven, groaning in the spirit, as we see portrayed here (John 11:33). Now if that sounds familiar, it is because “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us



“...we offer further proof that God is not yet through with His favored nation.”

Since Mary typifies all Hebrew believers who will have died before the Lord comes (see Part 1 of this series), when these unbelieving Hebrews “followed” her, it speaks of how unbelieving Hebrews in

with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). While the Lord is absent from us, the Spirit is groaning and interceding for us, just as the Lord intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34). He will be doing the same thing for the Hebrew saints in the Tribulation (Heb. 7:25), something we see pictured here as the Lord groans in the spirit, a picture of the intercession of both Christ and the Spirit.

Notice that the Lord is "troubled" here (John 11:33). His delay in returning will probably trouble Tribulation saints as much as the judgments they are enduring, prompting them to wonder if the Lord is troubled by their plight. That's when the words of Hebrews 4:15 will bring great comfort, for these words will assure those saints that their high priest *is* troubled by the feeling of their infirmities. We firmly believe that this is a transdispensational truth, and that it should comfort the reader to know that the Lord is touched with the feeling of your infirmities as well, that He is equally troubled by whatever it is that you are going through in your life. He is also eager that you remember that no matter what you are going through, His grace is sufficient (II Cor. 12:9).

The Lord's Love for His Brethren

If you believe that the Lord retained His omniscience in His incarnate stay among us, then you have to conclude that He was speaking anthropomorphically when He asked where Lazarus was buried (John 11:34), just as He will someday anthropomorphically ask, upon His return, for

the location of the nation that Lazarus symbolized. And you know the answer to this question, for at His Second Coming the Jews will be scattered all over the world, as they are today. When they answer Him in that day, "Come and see" (John 11:34), He will comply; and when He does, I believe He will weep (John 11:35) when He sees "firsthand" the spiritual death in which the nation will have lain for nearly 2,000 years. He will be "moved with compassion" when He sees them "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (cf. Matt. 9:36), and will weep over Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:41), saying once again, "how often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37).

Will the Lord weep when He returns to see Israel's sad state even though He knows He is about to raise her from her state of virtual death? If He does, surely it will be for the same reason He wept here, even though He knew that He was about to raise the man that typified the nation. Touched with the feeling of the infirmities of Martha and Mary, who were mourning the loss of their brother, He will "weep with them that weep" (cf. Rom. 12:15) in that day. This is always how the Lord felt about Israel; "in all their affliction *He* was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9).

Your Love for Your Brethren

It is important—and touching—to point out that when the Lord wept for Lazarus, even though He knew that He was about to raise him from the dead, it demonstrates that it is not unspiritual to weep at the funeral of a loved one,

even if you believe that he or she will someday rise from the dead. Don't forget, the Lord wasn't just a man, He was *the perfect man*. He never did *anything* wrong. So when He cried over Lazarus, you know it is not wrong to cry over *your* lost loved one. This is an especially good lesson for men, who sometimes think it unmanly to cry.



It wasn't unmanly or unspiritual when "*devout men* carried Stephen to his burial, *and made great lamentation over him*" (Acts 8:2). Paul was a man among men, yet he said that if Epaphroditus died he would have "sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. 2:27). Just remember to "sorrow not...as others which have no hope" (I Thes. 4:13), for you *do* have a hope, a blessed hope (Titus 2:13).

When the unbelieving Jews saw the Lord crying over Lazarus, they said, "Behold how He loved him" (John 11:36). Now that's religion for you, to think that crying proves you love the deceased! Crying over someone's death doesn't prove your love. Unbelieving Jews have been crying over Israel's spiritual death for 2,000 years now, but that doesn't prove they love the nation. The Lord Jesus proved that *He* loved Israel for, as He said, "greater love hath no man

than...that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). If you want to prove that you love *the Lord*, don't show Him your tears; that's religion. Show Him that you are willing to lay down your life as a living sacrifice for Him (Rom. 12:1,2). And remember, it is okay to cry at funerals, but it is also okay *not* to cry. Everyone grieves differently, and only religion demands that everyone grieve the same.

The Unbelief of Religion

When these unbelieving Jews said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (John 11:37), you know what they were really saying, don't you? They were saying that since the Lord *didn't* come to heal Lazarus, it meant that He *couldn't*. It's like what they said when the Lord was on the cross: "If thou be the Son of God, *come down from the cross*" (Matt. 27:40). When He *didn't*, they concluded it was because He *couldn't*. The real reason, of course, was that He was doing what was best for us spiritually in dying for our sins.

God always does what is best spiritually. The Lord let Lazarus die so He could prove His greatness in raising Him after four days. One of the reasons He let Israel die spiritually, and lay in this virtual state of death for nearly 2,000 years now, is to prove His greatness when someday He raises her from the dead.

One more thought about what these unbelieving Jews were saying. If you think about it, their words reveal that they were sorrowing over *what might have been*.

They were saying, in effect, “If the Lord had been here, things would have been different.” When you find yourself thinking like this—especially when you lose a loved one—you are thinking like an unbeliever. When your heart is breaking due to your grief, don’t think about what could have been if the Lord had been here. Instead, remember that all things *do* work together for our spiritual good (Rom. 8:28).

When these unbelieving Jews blamed the death of Lazarus on the Lord, it reminds us of how unbelievers blame pretty much everything on God. Everything from hurricanes and tornadoes (which they call “acts of God”), to rainy weekends, to babies with cancer, is laid at the doorstep of our loving God.



If you have ever wondered how God feels about this, we get some idea of the answer to this question when the Lord “groaned” when blamed for Lazarus’ death (John 11:38). Here it is important to remember that to *groan* is not to *grumble* or *complain*. Groaning is associated with *mourning* and *pain* and *sorrow*. It *hurt* the Lord to be blamed for the loss of this man, and it hurts God when He is

blamed for all the sorrowful things that came into existence when sin spoiled His perfect creation.

It probably hurts the worst when *believers* blame Him for their sorrows and troubles, and it is true, He could do something about all the bad things in your life. But before you blame Him for *not* taking away your burdens, remember that God has a plan to fix everything wrong in your life at the Rapture. And before you blame Him for tarrying, remember that *the reason* He prolongs His absence is to give more people a chance to be saved (cf. II Pet. 3:9,15). If you’re glad He waited for you, say Amen! If you can wait for the Rapture so that others can be saved, say Amen! While that second “Amen” is a little harder to utter, it is nevertheless how the Lord would have us look at His delay in coming for us.

The Stone and the Stink

The “stone” that was keeping Lazarus from leaving the tomb (John 11:38) is a picture of a stone that has been keeping Israel from rising from her spiritual death. We are told that the stones that lay over grave caves in Bible days often had information about the deceased written on them, similar to modern gravestones. If that be so, then the stone over Lazarus’ tomb reminds us of another stone with writing on it (Ex. 24:12). It is *the Law* that has kept Israel from rising from the dead for nearly 2,000 years now. When the Lord called upon the unbelieving Jews to roll the stone away (John 11:39), it is a picture of how the nation itself must roll away the stone of their faith in Moses and

learn to trust the Lord instead (cf. John 9:28).

The “stink” of the corrupting body of Lazarus (John 11:39) represents the stench in Israel any time they rebelled against God (Isa. 3:24), but the world will “see the glory of God” (John 11:40) when the Lord raises Israel from her spiritual corruption. The Lord knew His Father heard Him (11:41,42) because as a Hebrew under the Law (Gal. 4:5) only *sin* could keep God from hearing His prayers (Psa. 66:18), and He “knew no sin” (II Cor. 5:21). Thus this type assures us that God will someday give the Lord the nation that He asks Him to raise, as well as the heathen (Psa. 2:8).

The Call and the Coming Forth

“Come forth” (John 11:43) is a biblical command that is usually reserved for calling people forth from geographic locations such as cities and countries (Num. 11:20; Deut. 4:46; 24:9; 25:17; Jer. 37:5), not for calling them forth from the dead (cf. Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; Acts 9:34). While this command aptly fit the need to bring Lazarus from the geographic location of Abraham’s bosom, it is also a fitting type of the spiritual resurrection of the nation Israel, when the Lord will gather His people out of all the cities and countries of the world.

When Lazarus “came forth” doing the bunny hop, “bound hand and foot with graveclothes” (John 11:44), we see a picture of the current state of the nation Israel, with hands bound, unable to do what God wants them to do, and bound in the feet, incapable of

going where God wants them to go. In addition, “his face was bound about with a napkin,” a picture of the spiritual blindness that will continue to grip the nation until after the Rapture (Rom. 11:25).

Loosing the Bindings

When Lazarus rose from the dead still encumbered by his grave clothes (unlike the Lord, who rose right through His grave clothes [John 20:5-7]), it symbolized how he had not been given the resurrection life that the Lord had been given, and that Israel will one day receive. He just got his old life back, complete with an old nature that was bent on sinning. Imagine someone who had been raised from the dead still sinning against the One who raised him. Actually, it shouldn’t be too hard. You do it all the time (Eph. 2:1,5), something that prompted Paul to exhort, “if ye then be risen with Christ, *seek those things which are above*” (Col. 3:1).

If you are living in sin, the devil has *you* spiritually hog-tied, “bound hand and foot” with the grave clothes of sin. Why not follow the example of Lazarus? After he walked away from those grave clothes, he no longer bore the stench of death, illustrating that when God delivers, He delivers completely. When God delivered the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, they didn’t even smell like smoke (Dan. 3:27). That’s how God saves you; in His nostrils, you don’t even smell like the sinner you were when you were dead in trespasses and sins! The challenge of the Christian life is to make our practice match our position. At the Rapture, you’ll

leave your clothes behind, which will symbolize the complete break you'll make with your old life of sin. Until then, why not leave the grave clothes of sin behind, and live the life that God wants you to live, unencumbered by the bondage of sin?




The Lord's command to "loose him, and let him go" (John 11:44) would not have been easy to obey. The "loose him" part would have posed no problem; it was the "let him go" part that might have proved challenging. If you saw a man raised from the dead, wouldn't you have some questions for him about life beyond the grave? The silence attributed to Lazarus in Scripture suggests that the Lord didn't want Lazarus regaling people with tales of his life before the Lord raised him from the dead. This is a good thing to remember when called upon to give your testimony, especially if you have a sinful past. The Lord doesn't want you regaling people with the details of

your life when you were dead in trespasses and sins.

Resurrection Remorse

Finally, did you ever wonder how Lazarus felt about being raised from Abraham's bosom? We can imagine that his sisters were glad, but I wonder if we don't get a feel for how Lazarus himself felt about his resurrection when Samuel said to Saul, "Why hast thou *disquieted* me?" (I Sam. 28:15). If you are mourning the loss of a precious loved one, it is tempting to want them back, but you would only be disquieting them, bringing them back from a place where angels minister to them to this life, where doctors and nurses ministered to them. When we notice that Samuel was upset *with Saul*, not with the witch who brought him up, it is a good thing that our loved ones are beyond our recall, lest in a moment of weakness we were to bring them back and were to have to face their dismay.

We trust that if nothing else, these thoughts have taught you to read the gospel narratives with an eye that looks beyond the simple facts of the story to what these things might be revealing about Israel's future, similar to how the Old Testament narratives did (Ex. 14:21 cf. Isa. 11:15,16; Dan. 3:1-7 cf. Rev. 13:14,15, etc.). The future spiritual resurrection of the nation of Israel is a certainty, as is your future resurrection from the dead if the Lord doesn't come before you die. In the meantime, why not join the Apostle Paul in a fervent prayer to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection" *now*, in *this* life (Phil. 3:10). 

GROWING IN GODLINESS

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.

The following message was delivered in Cedar Lake, Indiana during the 45th Annual Berean Bible Fellowship Conference.

The setting for the story I am about to share took place in London in the late 1800s. A young pastor was preaching to his congregation one Sunday morning when he looked down and saw a godly pastor who had faithfully preached the gospel longer than anyone could remember.

After the service the young man came over to the old preacher and asked, “What did you think of my message this morning?” The seasoned pastor replied, “It was a very poor sermon, indeed!” The young pastor said, “So you didn’t think my explanation of the passage was a good one?” The venerable pastor said, “Actually, I thought it was very good!” “Well, didn’t you think my use of metaphors were appropriate or my argument conclusive?” Once again, the godly preacher responded, that he thought the metaphors were well placed and that he did a good job developing the text—but it was still a poor sermon.

At this point, the young pastor was anxious to know why he thought it was such a poor message. The old preacher said, “Because there was no Christ in it.” “But Christ,” he replied, “was not in the text!” “Young man, from every village, town, and hamlet there is a road to London, whether directly or indirectly. It’s your job to find a path to Christ for the sake of the Lord’s people.”¹

I couldn’t agree more! Everywhere we turn in the Scriptures, we see Christ. If we consider creation for example, God in the person of Christ created all things in six, literal, twenty-four hour days (Ex. 20:11; Col. 1:15-17). When we travel down the corridor of time to the night before the Exodus from Egypt, we learn that God instituted the Passover; it too pointed to Christ according to the Apostle Paul, for Christ is our Passover (Ex. 12:13; Lev. 23:4,5; I Cor. 5:7). When we move on to the end times, the beast that rises out

of the sea, which we know to be the Antichrist, will be overthrown and destroyed by Christ at His Second Coming (Dan. 2:44,45; 7:7; Rev. 13:1; 19:11-20). Search the Scriptures and you will find Christ from beginning to end.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

Paul had established the church at Thessalonica on his second apostolic journey. An apostolic journey differs from a missionary journey in the following way: Paul was the *first* to introduce the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery that had been hidden from ages and generations past. When the apostle traveled from city to city, he committed the grace of God to the Gentiles who believed. It was quite literally a ground-breaking effort! A missionary journey, on the other hand, is taking that which has already been revealed by Paul to the regions beyond. The church at Thessalonica was one of the first fruits of Paul's apostolic journeys; therefore, we have one of the first grace churches that was established by the Apostle Paul. This assembly is often referred to as a model church, so it is important for us to pay close attention as to why they were given this honor and recognition.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13).

Paul is reminiscing here about when he first came among them

to preach the gospel. He was truly touched that they had received it not as the word of men, but as the living Word of God. In this passage the Greek word for the first term “received” implies simply *hearing* of the Word; the Greek word for the second reference to “received” has the idea that they had *accepted or welcomed it*. When we join these two thoughts together, we have the principle that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Our Lord had much to say during His earthly ministry about hearing the Word of God:



“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The idea here is, take every opportunity to hear. Those at Thessalonica did so and they were saved as a result.

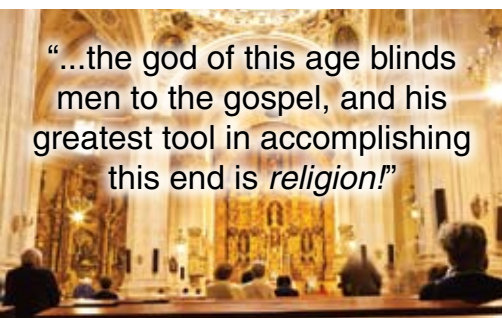
“Take heed what ye hear.” We have a responsibility to be discerning in our interaction with those who minister the Word. These saints were; therefore, they believed what Paul said was the truth. They loved the Word and meditated on it day and night, and became godly as a result of its influence in their lives!

“Take heed therefore how ye hear.” Some people want to hear anything other than the truth. They want their spiritual leaders to tell them what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. They have “itching ears” and would rather be entertained. One word sums them up—careless.

Notice that Paul “thanked God without ceasing” for them. The Word had done its perfect work in the lives of these lost souls—it

was *effectual* or operative, having changed their lives when they trusted Christ. In the first chapter of this epistle, we note how much these saints had grown spiritually in such a short period of time, which prompted the apostle to commend them for their faith, hope, and love. The manifestation of these three crowning graces showed they were living a godly life in Christ Jesus. The Word of God transforms lives! You see, those at Thessalonica were eager to grow in grace, that the world might see Christ in them.

Before I came to know Christ life was all about me! I was employed at a large company and was working my way up the corporate ladder. Now that I know Christ, it is all about others—leading lost souls to Christ, and building up believers in the faith.



“...the god of this age blinds men to the gospel, and his greatest tool in accomplishing this end is *religion!*”

For example, when I was in the hospital to have my pacemaker implanted, they had to remove the port that had been implanted when I had chemotherapy treatments. Since it is a rather simple procedure, they just gave me a local anesthetic on my right side. One of the two nurses who was assisting the surgeon stepped over to my side and said, “We hear you’re a pastor.” Of course,

I plead guilty to the charge! Apparently, word travels quickly in a hospital on such matters. She then said, “Would you mind if we ask you some questions about the Bible?” Of course, I was more than happy to agree. We discussed the Scriptures through the entire procedure, which gave me a great opportunity to interject the gospel. During this time, the surgeon was completely silent, I guess for good reason, seeing that she was working on a major artery! Afterward, however, she came around the bed and said to me, “Pastor, I just want to thank you for sharing those things with us, it was very informative!”

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

Those at Thessalonica saw the reality of the gospel in Paul’s life. But can this be said of us? What was it about Paul’s life that drew those at Thessalonica to his message? The answer to this is found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. The ministry the apostle was given is the same that we continue to carry out to this very day. So it is important to conform ourselves to God’s given pattern for the Church today. Paul’s life and ministry set the norm for the Age of Grace.

“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” (II Cor. 4:1,2).

Paul’s statement, “we have this ministry,” is twofold; it speaks of the gospel of salvation and the Mystery. As Paul carried out this ministry, he was grateful for God’s mercy, which enabled him to “faint

not.” Through all the persecutions and vicious attacks, Paul never became discouraged. His eyes were on the Lord! He had renounced the “hidden things of shame!” That is, the hidden agendas of others and their ulterior motives to make a name for themselves. “Not walking in craftiness,” unlike those who were cunningly using the cloak of preaching the Word of God for personal gain. This could not be said of the apostle who often went without so as not to burden the churches. “Nor,” he says, “handling the Word of the God deceitfully,” which means to ensnare and corrupt with error and unsound doctrine. A modern day example of this is the Emergent Church.



I believe this movement is attempting to redefine Christianity in the postmodern era. They use Christian terms and phraseology to cloak their agenda. The Emergent Church has shifted the emphasis of worshipping God through His Word to films, praise services, and contemporary music. Theologically, they have essentially forsaken sound doctrine and have taken a noncommittal approach to the Scriptures. They tend to want to reanalyze the Scriptures concluding, “We just can’t know for sure.” There are no absolutes—in other words, God’s Word is not the final authority in their eyes. In some circles of this

movement, there’s a strong emphasis on mysticism—the lighting of candles, chanting, and burning incense.² The entire system is built on having an emotional experience. Great care must be taken not to allow its subtleties to infiltrate our Grace assemblies. Beware!

Gospel Presentation

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ....For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Cor. 4:3-6).

What does the apostle mean in this passage when he states, “if our gospel be hid”? There are numerous things that could be said here, but the three most common examples are apprehension, the fear of men, and an unclear presentation of the terms of salvation. Paul would also have us understand that the god of this age blinds men to the gospel, and his greatest tool in accomplishing this end is *religion*! He persuades unbelievers that they can be saved by faithfully following the traditions of the organized church. Satan confuses the matter further by putting the concept of a scale of good works before them. He gets them to reason that if their good works outweigh their bad works, God will accept them. That’s the

devil's lie! Only the gospel can save the sinner from his sins or as Paul calls it in this verse, the gospel of the glory of Christ.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels...” (II Cor. 4:7a).



In biblical times, earthen vessels were clay pots that had been thoroughly baked in an oven. They were fraught with imperfections, which meant that no two were exactly alike. Archeologists have discovered that those who lived during that period secretly buried their treasures in clay pots for safekeeping. Of course, we put our riches and valuables in bank safes, with doors that are twelve inches thick. So why would God place these *unspeakable riches* of Christ in such an insecure place? After all, we are unworthy sinners, weak and frail, who have the sentence of death upon us. The hymn writer had it right when he wrote: “Prone to wander—Lord, I feel it—Prone to leave the God I love.”

The answer to the question is found in the latter part of our passage where it states, “that the excellency [exceeding greatness] of the power may be of God, and not of us” (v. 7b). While others sometimes think more highly of us than they should, essentially it is the power of God working

through us that produces results in the Lord's work. You see, it's not about us, it's about Christ! The greatness of the Apostle Paul's ministry is summed up in his own words, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” This was very obvious to those at Thessalonica, and may this be true of us as well.

SUFFERING FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (I Thes. 2:14-16).

We see from this passage that these dear saints were truly genuine in their faith. Like Paul, they endured much for the cause of Christ. If we boldly name the name of Christ, we too will suffer persecution, for those who “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” It is no secret that the unbelieving world hates Christ with a passion. Whenever we speak the Word of truth, we can be relatively sure we are going to suffer to some extent. Everyone goes through the normal occurrences of human suffering such as sickness, pain, and bereavement, but what I am referring to is the suffering we endure because we are believers in Christ. A form

of this suffering is seen when we enthusiastically share the gospel with our family, only to find they respond to it by disowning us. When we share Paul's gospel with those who have yet to hear it, we are often avoided like someone who has a contagious disease. But we're not alone! We need to realize that others are going through the same thing, or perhaps even greater difficulties.


Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by reminding them that the churches in Judea were also suffering at the hands of the enemies of the Cross. He purposely contrasts Judaism and Christianity to drive home a point. When the apostle makes reference to the churches of God in Judea, he is referring to the Kingdom Church. They operated under the umbrella of Judaism, which is based solely on the Law and the Prophets. It is the only religion that has ever been ordained of God or ever will be—all other world religions are false.

The Jewish religious leaders hated Christ; to them He was nothing more than a mere impostor. Because of their rejection of their Messiah, and forbidding Paul to speak to the Gentiles, their sins reached the highest heaven resulting in God's judgment. When the Jews stoned Stephen, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, it was their response to God's gracious offer of repentance at Pentecost for crucifying His dear Son. As a result, God set them aside in unbelief (Acts 7:54-60; Rom. 11:11,12,25).

True Christianity is a way of life. It includes all those *today* who have placed their faith in Christ's

death, burial, and resurrection to be saved. Therefore, in Paul's day, the saints at Thessalonica were members of the true Church, the Body of Christ. When they suffered for Christ, they were following in the footsteps of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the prophets, and the Apostle Paul. They were able to endure these hardships in the Lord's work knowing that others before them had suffered many of the same things.

But most importantly, they had immersed themselves in the Word of God, which gave them an inner strength that was a sweet-smelling savor to God. They saw and believed what is essential for us also to lay hold of, which is, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17,18). Take a moment to read II Corinthians 11:23-27 to see what Paul calls light affliction; it will give you a better perspective on the scope of the matter.

We end where we began--with Christ! He's our Savior, Sustainer, Counselor, and Guide. He gives us purpose in life, enabling us to accomplish things for God's glory that we never thought possible. He's all that He claimed to be, and more! 

Endnotes

1. *Spurgeon's Sermons*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, Volume 6, p. 357, Adapted.
2. Adapted, Author Unknown.



Interpreting the Will of God

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

As Israel's captivity in Babylon drew to an end, King Cyrus made a decree that was proclaimed "throughout all his kingdom" (Ezra 1:1):

"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven...hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem..."

"Who is there among you of all His people?...let him go up to Jerusalem...and build the house of the LORD..." (Ezra 1:2,3).

The Jews who took the king up on his offer returned to the land and got right to work building the temple (Ezra 2,3). This, of course, got the attention of the adversary, who inspired his followers to petition Artaxerxes, the king who rose up in the wake of Cyrus, to try to get the work on the temple brought to a halt (Ezra 4). Once they convinced this new monarch that the completion of the temple would incite the Jews to rebellion (4:11-16), he issued an order to cease and desist all work on the temple (Ezra 4:22), a decree which brought the work to a screeching halt (vv. 23,24).

But if you think that the God of heaven was going to take this lying down, think again! In the very next verse we read that He sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to address the Jews about their response to the king's decree (5:1). Ezra doesn't record the words of these prophets, but we don't have to guess what they were sent to say. In the opening words of his prophecy, Haggai wrote:

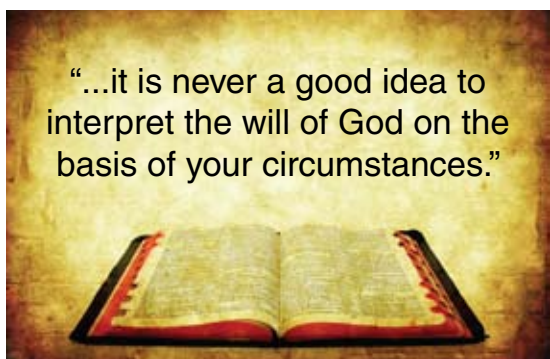
"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. 1:2).

Here we see the effect that the king's command had on the people of Israel. Having received an order from the king to cease and desist all work on the temple, they had interpreted this as the will of God.

Judging from what Haggai says here, they must have reasoned, “God must not want the temple built at this time, or else He wouldn’t have allowed the king to order the work stopped.”

If you think about it, why wouldn’t they think this way? Hadn’t God spoken through King Cyrus to say that they could build the temple in the first place? Aren’t God’s people supposed to obey the government? Even when they were in captivity, the Jews were told to obey the king (Jer. 40:9).

But as these perhaps well-meaning people soon found out, it is never a good idea to interpret the will of God on the basis of your circumstances. In this instance, let’s ask ourselves: “Was it God’s will for work on the temple to stop? And if not, how were they to know?”



God’s Will for Them

A quick check of our opening text will reveal that when King Cyrus ordered the temple be built, he said, “The Lord God of heaven...hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem.” If you are wondering *how* God charged him to build Israel’s temple, we believe someone called his attention to Isaiah’s *prediction* that he would do so (Isa. 44:28-45:4). While we can’t be sure, this someone was most likely Daniel, who had the king’s ear long before Cyrus took the throne. But no matter who it was that showed him this prophecy, Cyrus was wise enough to figure that he should probably obey any God that could call him by name over a hundred years before he was born!

But while Cyrus freely admitted that the God of heaven had charged him to build Him a temple, Artaxerxes’ order to *cease* work on the temple cites no such source of authority (Ezra 4:21,22). That is, he didn’t say, “The God of heaven changed His mind, and is now ordering me to cause the work on the temple to stop.” He was motivated purely by greed. You see, the adversaries of Israel had convinced him that if the temple was built, the Jews would rebel against his authority, and he would lose the revenue of their tax dollars (Ezra 4:13-20). This is what prompted him to order the work stoppage, a move that the Jews wrongly interpreted as the will of God.

God’s Will for Us

What a lesson for us! Even to this day, many of God’s people are quick to interpret the will of God by their circumstances rather than looking to the Word of God. We remember one young Christian lady

who was convinced that it was God's will that she marry an unsaved man. When we showed her what God had to say about being unequally yoked with unbelievers (II Cor. 6:14-18), she argued, "But if God didn't want me to marry this man, why would He have allowed him to come into my life?" Like the Jews in Ezra's day, she was guilty of ignoring a plain command from God, choosing rather to interpret His will on the basis of her circumstances, because of her own selfish interests.

Once you lay aside a clear command from the Word of God, it is easy to pursue your own selfish interests. We see this also in Haggai's next words to the Jews:

"Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?'" (Hag. 1:3,4).

Once the Jews allowed their circumstances to convince them that it wasn't time to build the temple, they began to pursue their own selfish interests by building lavish homes for themselves—another fallout from interpreting God's will by their circumstances.

Not God's Will for Us

Of course, the people of Israel should have known they were out of God's will, for when they ceased work on the temple, God began to chasten them, as Haggai reminded them in the next verses:

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little...and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:5,6).




At first glance, we are tempted to think he is talking about *our* wages, for who among us doesn't feel like there must be a secret siphon somewhere in our bank account! Then we remember that we are not under the Law (Rom. 6:14,15), and Haggai is describing a judgment that had befallen the Jews because they had broken the covenant of the Law, the contract they had with God. He had clearly warned them:

"...if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord...Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in..." (Deut. 28:15,38).

When the Jews saw this happening in their lives, they should have known it was the chastening of the Lord, God's response to their failure to pursue His revealed will in building the temple. But when *you* sow much and take in little, when *your* wages seem to be seeping out of a hole in *your* bag, don't be tempted to think that *you* must be

failing the Lord somehow. You are not under the Law, and it would be unrighteous for God to enact a penalty on you in accord with the terms of a contract to which you never agreed, and that your apostle assures you that you are not under.

And so we see that it is not only important to interpret God's will by God's Word, it is absolutely *crucial* that you interpret God's will in accord with His Word *rightly divided*! We don't have to tell you how preachers use verses like these out of the Law to browbeat sincere believers into thinking that they are poor or unhealthy because they must be disappointing the Lord in some way. Untold misery has been unleashed on untold thousands of earnest saints for nearly two millennia now, all of whom could have found relief in the precious message of God's grace, that sacred secret that was committed to our trust, along with the responsibility of making it known to all men. 



To purchase some works on knowing and discerning God's will, see pages 28 and 29.



Question Box

“Why did Paul instruct his readers to heed the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in I Timothy 6:3? Were they not to follow Paul’s teachings?”

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing...” (I Tim. 6:3,4).

While there are many things we can glean from the words of our Lord during His earthly ministry, Paul does not have these words in mind in this context. It is important to remember that the Lord spoke *again* when He introduced His heavenly ministry through the Apostle Paul. Paul is very clear when he wrote, “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11,12). So then, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ today are found in Paul’s Epistles (I Cor. 14:37). These are the teachings which are “according to godliness,” that is, teachings which, if they are adhered to, will enable us to walk worthy of our calling. —Pastor Sadler

What's the Word?

By Pastor Ricky Kurth



“...if any man hear My words, and believe not, *I judge him not*; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

“He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:47,48).

I'm sure that the unbelievers among the Lord's hearers were relieved to hear Him say that He had not come to judge them. But some of them may have remembered hearing Him say that “the Father judgeth no man, *but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*” (John 5:22). Well, if the Father committed all judgment to the Son, how could the Son say that He had not come to judge people?

The answer to this question is found in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). You see, the Lord was making a dispensational statement. He had not come to judge the world in His *first* coming, but in His *second* coming, He will come to “*judge and make war*” (Rev. 19:11).

Then, after the fiery judgment of the Second Coming (II Thes. 1:7,8), “God...hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness *by that man whom He hath ordained*” (Acts 17:30,31). We know that Paul speaks here of the Lord Jesus Christ since he goes on to say of this man “that He hath raised from the dead.” In that day, the day that the Lord described as “the last day” (John 12:48), the unsaved of all ages will stand before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11), where they will be judged guilty and condemned to the lake of fire (vv. 12-15). It is concerning *this* judgment that the Lord said, “*the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48).

Did you ever wonder what word will judge men in the last day? Believe it or not, this question must also be answered dispensationally! The word by which the Lord will judge unbelievers among the Jews to whom He was sent under the kingdom program (Matt. 15:24) is different than the word by which unbelievers who lived in the dispensation of grace will be judged.

The word by which unbelievers in the kingdom program will be judged was, as the Lord said in our text, a word that He had “spoken” during His sojourn here on earth. He gives us a hint as to what word that might be when He went on to call this word “a commandment” that the Father had given Him (v. 49), adding: “And I know that His commandment *is life everlasting*” (v. 50). Thus we know that whatever word the Lord spoke that will judge unbelievers under the kingdom program, it is a word that gave everlasting life to those that *did* believe this word.

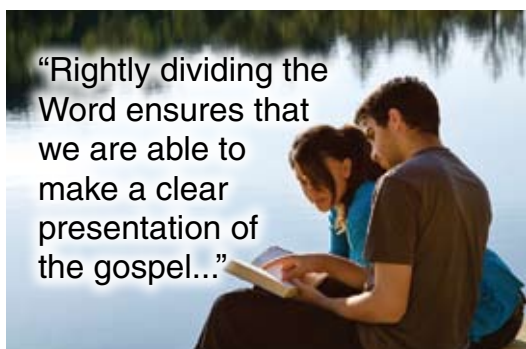
He was speaking, of course, of the word *of the gospel*. It is the *gospel* that saves men’s souls in any dispensation, and it is the *gospel* that will judge men guilty if they do not believe it. In the kingdom program, the *gospel* word that gave eternal life was *Jesus is the Christ* (John 6:67-69). This is the word that will someday judge unbelievers who lived

under the kingdom program when they stand before the Great White Throne if they refused to believe the word of that *gospel*.


Of course today, in the dispensation of grace, it is not enough to have the kind of “faith in His name” (Acts 3:16) that constitutes believing that “Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31; I John 5:1). Today you have to have “faith *in His blood*” (Rom. 3:25) to be saved; that is, you have to believe that “Christ died for our sins” and rose again (I Cor. 15:1-4). When unbelievers who lived in the dispensation of grace stand before the Lord’s Great White Throne, this is the word of the Lord by which *they* will be judged, the word He spoke through Paul.

How do we know that unbelievers from the dispensation of grace will be judged by the word of a different *gospel*? It is because our apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 15:16), describes the last day as “the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ *according to my gospel*” (Rom. 2:16), not according to the word that the Lord spoke when He ministered to the Jews. As you can see, *even the very gospel of salvation* has to be rightly divided!

We sometimes hear it said that rightly dividing the Word of truth is “an interesting doctrine, but not a very practical doctrine.” We



“Rightly dividing the Word ensures that we are able to make a clear presentation of the gospel...”

couldn't disagree more. What could possibly be more practical than knowing which words of Scripture have the power to give eternal life in the dispensation of grace, and which words will judge men guilty of their sins when they believe them not? Dispensationalism doesn't just help us when it comes to figuring out things like why the Lord said He wasn't sent to judge men after the Father committed all judgment to Him. Rightly dividing the Word ensures that we are able to make a clear presentation of the gospel that saves men's souls to those who will suffer the flames of eternal torment without it. 

The Unknown Hymn

By Pastor Cornelius R. Stam

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out..." (Matt. 26:30).

Often have we wondered what might have been the words of that sacred hymn, but God has seen fit to keep this from us for the present.

We have in our Bibles many great poetic expressions: the *Song of Moses*, the beautiful *Magnificat*, all the Psalms and many other poems, but the hymn that our Lord and His eleven apostles sang that night before leaving the Upper Room was evidently a well-known song, in which they could all join. We can almost imagine our Lord saying, *"Before we leave, let's sing..."*

We will not know the words of that hallowed hymn until we reach heaven, but we do know this: Our Lord and His apostles did not leave the Upper Room weeping and mourning. Though His soul had been deeply troubled as He approached the dreadful hour of His suffering and death, He could say: *"What shall I say? Father save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour"* (John 12:27). Though deeply saddened by Judas' base betrayal, *"having loved His own...He loved them unto the end"* (John 13:1), and His words of comfort and cheer during these last hours are now crowned with the singing of a hymn—a *hymn*, a song of praise.

Though the words of that hymn are as yet unknown to us, the lesson of its singing should not be lost. If the Upper Room scene closed with the singing of a hymn, surely we may be given the grace to sing God's praise in the midst of our lesser trials. And if our Lord, *"for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame"* (Heb. 12:2), surely our burdens may—and should—be lightened through the knowledge that by His grace, *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (II Cor. 4:17).



BBS Letter Excerpts

From Ohio:

"I agree with today's devotional email...I was confused throughout my entire childhood, and had doubts even into my twenties. Once I began to understand Paul's ministry and the proper division of Scripture, my doubts began to assuage....your articles always help clarify these confusing passages."

From Illinois:

"Wow...I am really enjoying *What It Means to Be a Grace Believer*...the outline is fantastic...coming out of the Baptist church I knew something was missing, but until I started studying the *Berean Searchlight*...I didn't know what I was missing, only that I was unhappy. I am spreading the Word to everyone that will listen. That's why I want to learn all I can, for myself and for others."

From Alberta:

"Your MP3 messages on Ephesians are amazing....You must spend a lot of time studying! I have learned so much already. The questions will slow down once I get more grounded in 'rightly dividing the Word.'" (That's what you think! LOL.—Ed).

From Wisconsin:

"Thank you so much, Pastor Sadler, for your faithfulness. I've been reading your works and I find them to be a true treasure. Also enjoyable! They make me realize that the struggle is all worth it when we put our faith and trust in Almighty God!"

From our Inbox:

"I read with great interest the email entitled *Miles and Miles of Scripture*. I read the Bible daily with my 6-year-old daughter and she sees me studying the Bible daily as well. This email gave me new ideas, new inspiration, and new motivation to take the next step in training her in God's Word."

From Missouri:

"It was a joy to meet and hear ones from BBS at the conference in Springfield, Illinois....Meeting new people who are one in Him is always a joy, and hearing messages from pastors who are committed to making known the message of His grace is always enriching to the heart."

From our Inbox:

"Thank you for this wonderful message, *The Gospel of Salvation*, by Paul M. Sadler. I know now where to stand."

From Florida:

"I love *Revelation* Volume 1, would like to know when the remainder of the series will be ready? I'll keep watch for it on your website." (We expect Volume 2 to be available by the end of the month.—PS).

From Facebook:

"Ricky Kurth's articles in the *Berean Searchlight* for September and October on *The New Covenant Connection* were a great read. The best I've ever seen on the subject."

From Colorado:

"I want to commend Paul Sadler's article written in the January 2013 *Searchlight* entitled *Historic Decisions for Christ*. I gained clearer insight into Cornelius' salvation, and while I have recently read Stam's *Acts* commentaries, this seemed to put me 'at the scene,' and helped me see exactly what dispensational changes had occurred between Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:43,44. When I get a special sense of understanding, like I did from reading this article, and I see the dispensational differences, I realize, somehow, a special encouragement."

From Texas:

"I enjoyed *Things That Differ* very much and I'm still studying it thoroughly. I'm a *serious student* of the Word, and plan to continue my education in this area...I hope to speak and teach one day as well."

From Virginia:

"I started the Ephesians commentary this evening (the first 75 pages) and am having a feast! I talked with a pastor today who agreed to study Pauline truth. He is an honest soul that frankly acknowledged that Paul did not teach water baptism."

From Michigan:

"My wife and I have a local church we are attending...and are helping with a new statement of faith. Many grace doctrines are being approved, even taking out water baptism. To our surprise many of these doctrines are already understood. Please pray for us as we help some of them see what is the fellowship of the mystery! We are also planning to attend the Middlebury conference...." (It was good to see you both at the conference!—Ed).

From British Columbia:

"We just had our Thanksgiving. There are so many things to be thankful for; reading my *Berean Searchlight* is one of them!"

From Colorado:

"Thank you so much for the prompt response to my request. I have been a recipient of the *Searchlight* for many years and have been greatly blessed through its ministry. I have also read a few of Brother Stam's works, and listened to some of his tapes. Although I personally look at some issues differently than the position of BBS on a few doctrines...I look forward to sharing eternity with you folks....Paul is my apostle, and his letters have been the focus of my study and teaching for many years."

From our Inbox:

"I keep a notebook of lessons and articles that I copy from the *Searchlight*....Your letters are certainly joining the others. How I appreciate you steering me a little straighter. I also share these correspondences with others....I'm eager to print your response and get it highlighted."

From our Inbox:

"The Middlebury, Indiana Bible Conference, Pastor Sadler, was absolutely wonderful...It was great being around other people who believe the same as you and get to hear such *meaningful* preaching. You will need a bigger room next year for sure. I just finished your series on, *What It Means to Be a Grace Believer* (Priceless!). Everyone should have at least one copy of that." (I am humbled before God and thank Him for the opportunity to proclaim the riches of His grace.—PS).

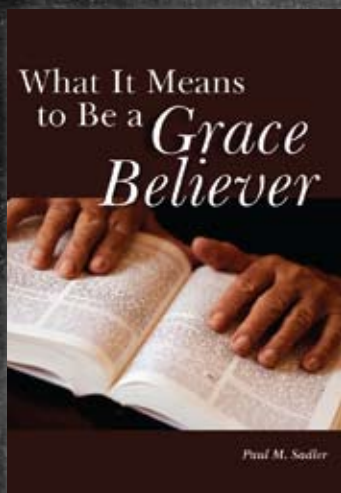


"These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
—Acts 17:11

Knowing the Will of God

What It Means to Be a Grace Believer

By Paul M. Sadler



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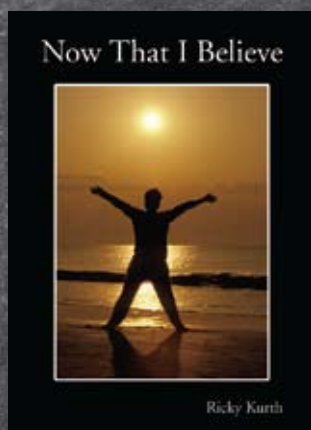
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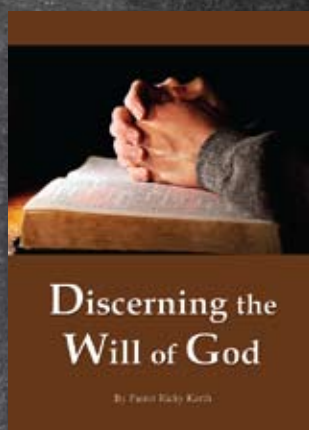
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News and Announcements

Florida in February is where you want to be, for more reasons than just the weather! *Grace Bible Fellowship* of Nokomis has asked Dr. Robert Nix, director of *Berean Bible Institute*, to come and warm their hearts with the sound teaching of God's rightly divided Word. Make plans now to attend this February 21-23 conference, and be sure to let Pastor Ed Bedore know you are coming: (414) 313-0928, eandlbedore@gmail.com.

Florida in March: Okay, so you couldn't get away in February. Not to worry, *Grace Bible Fellowship* of Inverness has got you covered. March 1,2 will come in like a lion when Pastor Kevin Sadler thunders forth the truth about the Lamb of God from the perspective of the Apostle Paul. Host Pastor John Fredericksen and the warm-hearted saints of GBF are waiting to hear from you at jrfgrace@gmail.com or (407) 952-0510.

Pennsylvania in April: One of the first signs of spring is the annual conference hosted by *Berean Grace Fellowship* of Lebanon. Pastors John Fredericksen and David Hobbs will be leading the studies this year at the *Lantern Lodge Conference Center* in Myerstown. Contact Bill Schaeffer at hitnmis@verizon.net to let him know you'll be coming to this April 26,27 feast on God's rightly divided Word.

Our BBS 2014 Conference Schedule is now posted on our website, and will appear in the *Searchlight* next month. Pastor Sadler's schedule is already full for this year, but your editor still has one opening. If your church would like to hold some special meetings, or if you are a stranded grace believer seeking to establish a grace work, there's no better way to attract *Searchlight* readers in your area than by hosting a BBS conference.

Ministry Opportunity: Our good friend Janet Wilson is looking for a man of God to lead a ministry in the Wilmington, North Carolina area. If you are interested, why not give her a call at (910) 395-1066. Even if you are just in between ministries, and you can spare a few months before beginning your next work, Janet would like you to consider joining the saints in her area in seeing what God can do there on an interim basis.



The *Penedo da Saudade Lighthouse* is located in Portugal near her northern Spanish border. Built in 1912, the light stands above a huge rock where a widowed duchess used to go to mourn the death of her husband in 1641. The rock and light overlook a beach that was later named after him: Penedo da Saudade.

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A New Year's Challenge

"...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14).