

The **BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT™**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

August 2018



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The lighthouse on this month’s front cover is located on Holiday Island, Germany.

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

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

Editor: Ricky L. Kurth/Layout and Design: Jessica Sadler

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The Berean Searchlight (ISSN 0005-8890), August 2018. Vol. 79, Number 5.

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. Periodical postage paid at Germantown, WI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Berean Searchlight, N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022-0756 and additional mailing offices.



A Note From the President

Dear Friends in Christ,

The 50th anniversary conference of the *Berean Bible Fellowship* in June was truly a blessing. The fellowship was sweet, the music was uplifting, and the Word was proclaimed boldly and clearly according to the sound doctrine of Paul's gospel.

My wife, Jessica, put together a musical PowerPoint presentation of photographs and brochures from the past 50 years of the conference. We watched this presentation on Tuesday afternoon as BBF celebrated its 50th anniversary. One of the pictures was titled, "Naomi Wakeman and her 40 BBF children." When I was a child, Naomi Wakeman was my teacher at the BBF conference, and she made a deep impact on me through her love of the Word and her emphasis on Scripture memorization. I mention the 40 BBF children because this year there were 40 children in the youth classes, in addition to 15-20 teens! This is the most young people the BBF conference has had in years. It was very encouraging to see numerous families with young children. They represent the future of the Grace Movement!



Pastor Kurth gave a stirring four-part series for the daily Bible Hour under the theme, "You've Got to Stand for Something!" I encourage you to order this series on CD or DVD from the *Berean Bible Fellowship*. It challenged us to stand for the Lord and His truth as so many in the Bible did, and as the men did who founded the *Berean Bible Fellowship*.

One of the special moments of the 50th anniversary celebration was learning how many years people had attended. Many were first-time attendees to the conference; many had attended for 10, 20, or 30 years, but only one person has been there all 50 years: Rondo Steinbron from Edmond, Oklahoma. The BBF Board presented him with a plaque of appreciation for his support and faithful attendance of the BBF conference.

The *Berean Bible Society* has also been there for all 50 years. We at BBS support and are appreciative of the firm stand taken by the BBF for the truth of the revelation of the mystery.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Kevin Sadler, President

ARE YOU A PILLAR OF GOD'S COMMUNITY?



When Paul shared his new message of grace with the leaders of the twelve apostles, it seemed that James, Peter and John were going to be “pillars” (Gal. 2:9). That is, it seemed like they weren’t going to receive his new message, that instead they were each going to be *as immovable as a pillar* when it came to acknowledging it.

That’s the way the word “pillar” is used in Revelation 3:12, where we read that God will take those who overcome the temptation to take the mark of the beast in the Tribulation and make each one a pillar, a permanent part of His temple—the *living* temple made up of believers (cf. Amos 9:11,12). In that same sense of the word *pillar*, James, Peter and John looked like they would *permanently* resist Paul’s new message and cling to the truth the Lord had given *them* for the dispensation that was passing away.

By the way, that’s how *you* should be about the truth that God has given *you*. You should cling to it *with all your might*. You know, the way Peter clung to the truth God had given him in the Law when the Lord surprised him with a command to eat unclean animals. Peter replied, “*Not so, Lord*” (Acts 10:14). He stood there arguing *with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself*, standing his ground, saying, “Your Word says I can’t eat unclean animals.” Now, if he put up that kind of fight with the Lord, imagine the battle he gave *Paul* over something new! I expect that ol’ boy gave Paul *the fight of his life!* “What do you mean there’s an entire new program called the mystery that the prophets knew nothing about?” (cf. Eph. 3:1-9).

And listen, *he was 100% right to do so*. That’s the way you should be about the truth that God has given you through Paul, because Paul says the church of which you are a part is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). When someone *attacks* the truth, you need to give him the fight of his life! Graciously, of course (2 Tim. 2:24,25). But if Stonewall Jackson stood *like a stone wall* in the onslaught of enemy opposition, *you should too*. God help us to be like Jeremiah, whom God made “*an iron pillar...against the whole land*” (Jer. 1:18,19).

When the dust of this life settles and eternity begins, it will be all that will have mattered.

—Pastor Ricky Kurth

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST

Caesarea, Mount Carmel, and Nazareth

PASTOR KEVINSADLER
BBS President

In preparation for a tour of Israel in May 2019 that will be hosted by *Berean Bible Society* and *Berean Bible Institute*, leaders from BBS and BBI went on a familiarization tour of Israel this past May. These leaders included myself, Pastor John (and Terri) Fredericksen, Dr. Robert Nix, and Pastor Andy Kern. Upon hearing that a group of pastors were going to Israel, other pastors and leaders of local churches chose to join us: Pastor Jim Harley, Pastor Jeff Bertram, Pastor Don Hosfeld, and Jim Humphrey. One of the special things that happens on a trip like this is that, after spending ten straight days together, you form a close bond with the other people on the tour. You see and experience the same special places, you laugh together, and make unforgettable memories. The fellowship we enjoyed was very special, and we all grew closer.



On the flight to Israel, there were many orthodox Jews with us. We flew overnight to Israel and, as it neared dawn, I woke up to seeing many Jewish men and boys standing in the exit rows in their prayer shawls and phylacteries. They rocked back and forth as they prayed. I later learned during our tour that Jews often pray at sunrise and sunset. Seeing those young boys following in the footsteps of their fathers, and observing their zeal toward their religion, I felt the Lord building a greater burden in my heart for Jewish people, who “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). This continued throughout the trip.

As we flew into Tel Aviv, it was thrilling to look out the window as we approached the coast of Israel. I thought of how important this place is in the plans and purposes of God and how much of the Bible is centered on this land. And I thought of how our Lord and Savior came to this world and walked the earth in this place.



CAESAREA

Our first stop on the tour was the city of Caesarea, which is along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea was built by Herod I (also known as “Herod the Great”) who named it in honor of Caesar Augustus. You may recall a biblical account of Herod’s evil: After the wise men from the East visited him, he tried to kill Christ, the true King of the Jews, by ordering the killing of all children two years old and younger in and around Bethelhem (Matt. 2:16-18).



After going on a footsteps-of-Paul tour in 2017, I realized that, being in Caesarea, I was still following the footsteps of Paul. A riot took place in Jerusalem when Paul was falsely accused of bringing a Gentile (Trophi-mus) into the temple (Acts 21:27-31). Paul was taken into custody by the Roman authorities as they investigated the matter. A plot made against

the life of Paul was uncovered and, for his protection, Paul was brought from Jerusalem to Caesarea under the cover of darkness with a large Roman military escort:

“And he [the chief captain] called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor” (Acts 23:23,24).

When Paul arrived in Caesarea, he was kept for five days in the guard room attached to Governor Felix’s residence at Herod’s palace (Acts 23:35, 24:1). You can see the ruins of Herod’s palace in Caesarea, and even see the freshwater swimming pool that was part of the palace.



Because Governor Felix hoped for money to be given to him to release Paul, he kept him in custody. Our apostle was held in Caesarea for more than two years (Acts 24:26,27). During his time in Caesarea, Paul stood before the Roman Governor Felix and then Governor Festus, who succeeded Felix. Paul at those times defended himself against the Jews accusations; “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25), and he spoke of his faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

After Felix was replaced by Festus, Herod Agrippa II, Roman ruler of Judea and great grandson of Herod I, came with the his sister Bernice to visit, and pay their respects to the new Governor. While they were visiting, Festus brought up the matter of his prisoner Paul, whom he had inherited from his predecessor and whom the Jews desired to kill. This intrigued Agrippa, and he asked Festus to hear Paul for himself, to which Festus readily agreed. Paul recounted his conversion on the Damascus Road in hopes of reaching Agrippa for Christ (Acts 26:9-20). But at the end of Paul’s testimony, “Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

These eight words have to be among the saddest within the pages of Scripture. “Almost” is lost. “Almost” is not heaven. “Almost” is not saved. And sadly there have been many who have followed Agrippa in “almost” being persuaded to trust Christ.

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:29).

Paul longed for Agrippa to believe, and not only him, but all those that were present that day. He said he wished they could be altogether as he was: saved from his sins, having the peace, joy, and assurance of salvation, and the sure hope of heaven. We pray the same for those with whom we share Christ.

As our tour guide read Acts 26 in Caesarea, it made the Scriptures come alive as we stood there feeling the breeze from the Mediterranean, hearing the waves, and seeing the site where Paul stood before King Agrippa. We experienced this throughout Israel when the Word of God was read in biblical locations. It was spiritually meaningful and moving.



The Apostle Peter also came to Caesarea to visit the Roman Centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10:24,25). Peter was shown, first by his vision of the great sheet containing all manner of animals to eat (Acts 10:11-

16), and then by being led to enter the home of an unclean Gentile to share Christ (Acts 10:17-33), that what was considered unclean in the past was no longer unclean. This is a pivotal account in the Book of Acts, showing that God’s dealings with mankind were changing from law to grace, from prophecy to the mystery.

In Caesarea, the “Pilate Stone” was found in 1961. A replica of it is on display there. The artifact is significant because it is an archaeological find of an authentic 1st-Century Roman stone inscribed with the name “Pontius Pilatus.” It is extra-biblical proof of the existence of Pontius Pilate. We don’t need to see these types of discoveries to know that our Bible is true, but they are faith-affirming and encouraging. The whole trip to Israel is like that. All the biblical sites, cities, mountains, and archaeological finds combine in an overwhelming volume of proof of the truth and accuracy of God’s Word.



MOUNT CARMEL

Mount Carmel is not far from Caesarea. Arriving there you find a large statue of Elijah the prophet. Elijah had a showdown with 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The terms of the showdown were for two bulls to be killed and cut up and placed on wood, without any human help in lighting the fire, the deity that responded in sending fire upon the slaughtered bull would be proven to be the true God.

The prophets of Baal cried out to their god, leaped on the sacrifice, even cut themselves, all to no avail. Elijah repaired an altar of the Lord on the mount, and put twelve stones around the altar representing the twelve tribes of Israel. He dug a trench, arranged the wood, cut up the bullock, and directed that four barrels of water be poured over the sacrifice and the wood. He repeated the pouring of water two more times. Then Elijah prayed to the true and the living God, with no shouting, no pleading, and no jumping on the altar. It was just a plainly-spoken request that the LORD show Israel that He alone is God. The response was immediate, and a consuming fire fell from heaven and consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water in the trench (1 Kings 18:19-39).



It was special to stand in the place where Elijah stood alone and took a stand for the LORD. He was outnumbered 450 to 1, but with God on his side, he was a victorious majority. After the contest with the prophets of Baal and slaying these false prophets in the Brook Kishon (which still exists at the base of the mount), Elijah sat down “and put his face between his knees” (1 Kings 18:42). He then told his servant to check the horizon and look to the Mediterranean Sea. The servant told Elijah that he didn’t see anything (v. 43). Elijah told him to go back seven times, and on the seventh check a small rain cloud was seen in the distance. It was the size of a man’s hand (v. 44). After not raining for seven years, it was a raincloud that brought “a great rain” to Israel (v. 45). What fascinated me was that, standing on Mount Carmel, you could look out and see the Mediterranean Sea, and easily picture where the cloud like a man’s hand was seen in the distance. In every way, the Scriptures are accurate and true!



While we stood on top of Mount Carmel, we heard big guns firing in the distance. We were certain this was Israel’s response to Iran shooting rockets from Syria into the Golan Heights. Also, during the ten days we were in Israel, there was unrest in Gaza while the US Embassy was being opened and dedicated in Jerusalem. With all that going on, we *never* felt unsafe the entire time we were there. Please don’t allow fears about safety to be the reason not to come on a tour of Israel. The security is tight, and they do everything possible to make you safe.



After Mount Carmel, we next visited the city of Megiddo, which sits on a large mound. The large plain below Mount Carmel is in the valley of Jezreel, also known as the valley of Megiddo. This large plain



stretches for a long distance before the nearby city of Megiddo. When the people of Israel invaded the Promised Land under Joshua, they did not drive the Canaanites out of Megiddo (Josh. 17:11-12). Many ruins from the time of the Canaanites have been unearthed in Megiddo.

We saw a stone manger there, reminding us of the type of



manger that the Lord was likely laid in when He was born.

In Israel's history, the broad plain that stands before Megiddo was a place of numerous decisive battles: Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera and his Canaanite army (Judges 4-5); Gideon and his 300 drove off the 135,000 man Midianite and Amalekite armies (Judges 7); and an Egyptian army killed Josiah, King of Judah (2 Kings 23:29).



Also, here on the plain before the city of Megiddo, the vast army of the Anti-Christ will gather at the end of the Tribulation period for the battle of Armageddon. "Armageddon" is a Hebrew word (Rev. 16:16). *Har* in Hebrew means mountain, and "Mageddon" is the name of the place. "Armageddon" means Mount Megiddo.

NAZARETH

Israel has nearly every terrain and landscape that exists: seas, lakes, streams, rivers, waterfalls, plains, hills, mountains, valleys, forests, and desert. Nazareth sits on top of a mountain. Nazareth, of course, was where Gabriel told Mary about Christ's birth (Luke 1:26,27), and it is where the Lord was raised and grew up (Luke 2:39,40). We visited a replica village of Nazareth, where we learned some interesting things.

Many believe the word "Nazareth" comes from the Hebrew word *netser*, which means offshoot. The Hebrew term *netser*



was used for the offshoots of trees, and we saw an example of one growing beside an olive tree in Nazareth. Its biblical significance is that *the Offshoot*, the righteous Branch of David and King of Israel (Jer. 23:5), lived and was raised in Nazareth: “And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch [Heb. *netser*] shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1).

Our tour guide pointed out a pomegranate tree as we walked by one. Many Jews believe there are 613 seeds in a pomegranate, just as there are 613 commandments in the Law of Moses. Because of this, Jews eat pomegranates every year on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.



We saw a re-creation of a carpenter’s shop. This reminded us how it was in Nazareth that the Lord learned the trade of being a carpenter (Matt. 13:54-56; Mark 6:1-3). The hands that created the universe created things out of wood in Nazareth.



One cannot pinpoint exact locations for many biblical events or places in Israel. Our tour guide often reminded us of this. We, of course, understood. But it was exciting just to be in the vicinity of where these things took place. In Nazareth, we were surrounded by modern homes, buildings and businesses, but it was encouraging just to be

in the area where our Lord was raised and lived most of His earthly life.


We also saw a re-creation of a synagogue in Nazareth. This immediately brought Luke 4 to my mind, when the Lord stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61:1-2 about the Messiah and how He would “preach the gospel to the poor...heal the brokenhearted...preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind...To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18,19). The Lord then “closed the book...gave it again to the minister, and sat down” (v. 20), and told those present, “This day is





this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (v. 21). The Lord rightly divided the Word when He closed the book, because the next part of Isaiah 61:2 says, “...and the day of vengeance of our God,” which speaks of the Lord’s Second Coming.

The people of His hometown rejected the Lord and the truth that He was their Messiah. They were filled

with wrath, and led Him to the brow of a hill to throw Him off of it, but the Lord passed through their midst, and left them (Luke 4:28-30). As I thought of Christ’s rejection in Nazareth and how quickly the people turned against Him, it reminded me, when we share the truth of God’s Word rightly divided with those around us in our hometowns, how quickly they often reject and turn against us too, and would like to throw us off a cliff! Everything Christ did was pleasing to the Father and was His will. It is likewise pleasing to God the Father when we are faithful to the truth, and we proclaim it, even in the face of rejection and ridicule. 

To Be Continued!

Join us May 7-16, 2019

BBS/BBI Tour of Israel

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Think About What You've Done!

A Study In Haggai

PASTOR RICKY KURTH
Editor

One day Little Johnny said to his teacher, “Miss Williams, you wouldn’t punish me for something I didn’t do, would you?” When she answered, “Of course not!” Little Johnny replied, “Good, because I didn’t do my homework!”

A few generations ago, Little Johnny’s teacher would have *spanked* him for disobedience and sassiness like that, and then he’d have received *another* spanking from his parents when he got home. In those days, parents knew that the Bible heartily recommends the application of the board of education to the seat of learning (Prov. 23:13,14; 29:15,17)! But these days parents often just say to their disobedient child, “Now go to your room *and think about what you’ve done!*” That’s good advice, but nothing will cause a child to think about what he’s done wrong like a good paddling!

The Bible word for spanking is *chastening* (Prov. 13:24; 19:18), and when it came to disciplining the children of Israel, God the Father practiced what He

preached! If they didn’t hearken to His Word, He chastened them physically. Now, He couldn’t take the nation over His knee, of course, as an earthly father would do. But He warned them in advance that He would chasten them with physical punishments such as sickness, droughts, crop failures and famines (Lev. 26:14-39). That’s how God treated the children of Israel under the Law.

But is God chastening believers with physical punishment today, under grace, if they disobey Him? While some good grace pastors and teachers say yes, I believe God sees believers today as adult “sons” (Gal. 4:6), and uses the words of Scripture “for correction” (2 Tim. 3:16) rather than applying “the rod of correction” (Prov. 22:15). You know, the same way you treat *your* adult children!

How Chastening Worked

Under the Law, God clearly spelled out *how* He would punish the children of Israel if they did not obey Him (Deut. 28:15-68). So any time these punishments fell on them, they could know beyond

the shadow of a doubt that they were being chastened of God. By contrast, our Apostle Paul, the apostle of this dispensation, never delineates any such list of ways in which God will punish us if we don't hearken to His Word. Because of this, any surmising on our part that God is chastening us must rest on mere conjecture, and not on the Word of God to us through Paul.

As we resume our study of the Book of Haggai, we see a vivid illustration of how physical chastening worked under the Law. The people of Israel had disobeyed God in Haggai's day, and God had chastened them. After they received this spanking, Haggai then called upon them *to think about what they had done* and "consider" that they had brought God's punishment upon themselves:

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

"Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:5,6).

When the prophet called on them to "consider" their ways, their thoughts should have immediately gone to the words of Moses, who had warned them in the Law,

"...consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee" (Deut. 8:5).

But when the punishments that Haggai mentions began to fall on Israel, it appears that God's people *weren't* considering their ways, causing them to fail to make

the connection between the woes that had befallen them and their disobedient conduct.

How Israel Sinned

If you are wondering *how* they had disobeyed God in Haggai's day, back then God wanted His people to rebuild His temple—but they seemed more interested in building nice homes for themselves (Hag. 1:1-4). That's when God began to chasten them *in the exact ways about which He had warned them*. For instance, when He said, "ye have sown much, and bring in little" (1:6), they should have considered that He had warned them,

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

The children of Israel lived in a fruitful land, but when they disobeyed God,

"He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein" (Ps. 107:33,34).



Now *usually* when God turned their rivers into a wilderness, and their watersprings into dry ground, the people of Israel *knew*

they were being chastened, and were ashamed:

“Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed...” (Jer. 14:4).

If you are a famer, are you embarrassed when it doesn't rain? My uncle was a farmer in Grant Park, Illinois, and I can tell you that he was *never* ashamed when it didn't rain, for he knew that any lack of precipitation wasn't his fault! But when it didn't rain *in Israel*, the plowmen were rightfully ashamed, for they knew that it *was* their fault, that they were being chastened by God for their disobedience.

Of course, there were other times when God's people in Israel would *not* recognize His chastening, and He would have to remind them of the shame they should have been feeling:

“Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen...for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up...” (Joel 1:11,12).

But as a grace believer living in the dispensation of grace, you need *never* be ashamed of any of the woes that befall you in life, for when you stop to “consider” *your* ways, you know that Paul never warned *you* that God would chasten you with the rod of correction.¹

But when Haggai told his countrymen in Israel to consider their ways in connection with the meagerness of their harvest, it is evident that he was living in yet *another* time when the children of Israel didn't recognize the chastening hand of God.

More Warnings of Chastening Fulfilled

To help them make that connection, the prophet pointed out *another* area where their situation matched God's warnings of judgment. When he added, “ye eat, but ye have not enough” (Hag. 1:6), they should have considered that God had warned them about this too:

“...if ye will not hearken unto Me...ye shall eat, and not be satisfied” (Lev. 26:14,26).

“...they shall eat, and not have enough...because they have left off to take heed to the LORD” (Hos. 4:10).

“Therefore also will I make... thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied...” (Micah 6:13,14).

God had also warned His people that disobedience would bring *a drought*,

“And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron” (Deut. 28:23).



So when God asked His people in Haggai's day to consider that “ye drink, but ye are not *filled* with drink” (Hag. 1:6), they should have known that they were experiencing a drought because of their sinful disobedience (Ezek. 4:16,17). And it's not like they

could drink *wine* when their supply of water ran low, for if they disobeyed God, He had *also* vowed,

“Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them” (Deut. 28:39).

If these allusions to the law didn’t cause Haggai’s people to consider that they were being chastened, he reminded them that “ye clothe you, but there is none warm” (Hag. 1:6). This should have tipped them off that something *supernatural* was going on. When a land is well watered, the humidity is high, and clothing doesn’t keep you as warm as when the humidity is low. Only God could have made it so clothing didn’t yield warmth in the middle of a drought like the people in Haggai’s day were experiencing.

The children of Israel were sure to feel the pinch that God was applying, for they probably anticipated record crops in Haggai’s day. You see, God had instructed them to let the land rest every seventh year (Lev. 25:4), and told them that if they didn’t,

“I will scatter you among the heathen...then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies’ land; even then shall the land rest” (Lev. 26:33,34).

True to His Word, when the people of Israel *refused* to let their land rest every seventh year for 490 years, God allowed them to be scattered among the heathen in Babylon for 70 years, to make up for the 70 sabbath year rests that the land had missed. They remained in captivity in Babylon

“...until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years” (2 Chron. 36:21).

But that means the land lay *fallow* for 70 years, and all the nutrients that farming takes out of the soil were replaced by God’s laws of nature. By rights the land should have been producing *record crops* instead of the leanness their disobedience had generated, and they were sure to feel the pinch of this loss sorely.²

Holey Wages!

And when Haggai pointed out that “he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes” (Hag. 1:6), that’s something else they were sure to feel sorely! Back in the days before paper money, if you put the coins of your week’s pay in a bag with “holes” (plural), not much of it would be left by the time you got home, if any. God was employing this figure of speech to point out that their money wasn’t *profit-ing* them, just as He had warned them:



“...if ye will not hearken unto Me...your strength shall be spent in vain” (Lev. 26:14,20).


And sure enough, under the chastening hand of God, they

went to work, spent their strength, *but it was all in vain*, it didn't profit them.

Maybe you are thinking, "Wait a minute! I earn wages that don't seem to profit me either!" If so, I hear ya. I can relate. But you see, *our* ability to profit is dependent upon the vagaries of capitalism. Israel's *wasn't*. Israel's ability to profit from their labor was dependent solely on their obedience to God, something that was sorely lacking in Haggai's day.

In closing, I hope you see that when God chastened His children with corporal punishment, He always clearly spelled out in advance how He would do so, so that He could refer back to His warnings to explain why He had punished them. In the absence of any warnings of chastening in Paul's epistles, believers today would have to look to the Law to clearly identify chastening in our own lives, and "we are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:15).

So I would encourage you to stop looking at the sorrows and

woes of life as the chastening hand of God, and wondering how you might have sinned to incur them. Instead, rejoice in God's grace and let *His grace* teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, so that you can "live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12). 

ENDNOTES

1. You may reap what you sow (Gal.6:7), for the principle of reaping and sowing is interdispensational. So if you get sinfully drunk every day, you will reap a diseased liver. But the natural consequences of sinful living are a separate and distinct thing from the chastening God gave the people of Israel. Their chastening did not have that natural "cause and effect" relationship between their sin and what God caused them to suffer. That is, poor crops are not related to a failure to build a temple the way liver failure is related to heavy drinking.

2. This means that their poor crops weren't a result of reaping what they sowed, an interdispensational principle (Gal.6:7), for they had sown good farming technique in letting the land rest 70 years, and so should have been reaping good crops instead of the poor harvest caused by the judgment of God on their sin.



“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”

—Corrie Ten Boom

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God and Your Relationship to Him

ROGER MASSEY
GUIG Writer

*The following is a lesson from our BBS Sunday School line **Growing Up in Grace** "Grace Guidebook 1" for teens which will be printed in 2019.*

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:17-18).

Have you ever talked to a worm? You've seen them when they come out on the sidewalk after a rain. They lie there drying in the sun or maybe squirming a bit. Have you ever stopped and tried to start up a conversation? And if you did, did the worm respond?



Worms are far less complicated creatures than humans. They don't even have the brains to know enough not to crawl onto sidewalks. And they have no idea that we exist.

God is high above us in every way—strength, intelligence, ability, glory. You might expect that our relationship with God would be about on the same level as a worm's relationship with us. But there's a difference. God specifically created us to have a relationship with Him. He designed us with the ability to understand a lot about Him (but far, far from everything) and to know Him. He created us in His image, which means, in part, that we can have conversations with Him.

But even though we have been created with the ability to know God, we still wouldn't if He hadn't started the conversation. In the past, God spoke directly to people, like Adam and Eve and even Cain (Gen. 4:7).

Later on, God spoke to people through prophets who passed on His words verbally or by writing them down. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1).*



Now, God has given us all the information about Himself that we need in His Word, the Bible. To hear Him and get to know Him now, we have to study His Word. He hasn't told us everything about Himself, and we couldn't understand most of it if He did. But He has told us a lot. We can know:

- That He is a spirit, that He is eternal, and that He is wise. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (1 Tim. 1:17).*
- That He created the universe and everything in it for His own purposes. *For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him (Col. 1:16).*
- That He is perfect (righteous) and just. *And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness (Psa. 9:8).*

About now you might be wondering why a God who is all-powerful and eternal and righteous would be interested in having a relationship with sinful humans. The answer to that question is also found in Scripture. We can know:

- That He is love. *But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth (Psa. 86:15).*
- That He desires that we know Him and love Him in return. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).*
- That, because of His grace, He has made a way for us to have a relationship with Him. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).*

But God’s plan to enable us to have a relationship with Him didn’t come easy. Part of being created in the image of God is having free will—the ability to make choices. Adam and Eve were created without sin and put into a perfect world. But they were given the choice whether or not to obey God. This choice grew on a tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told them not to eat the fruit from that one tree. They made the wrong choice and ate it. That choice was sin, and it broke their relationship with God.

God is life, and separation from God is separation from life. The moment Adam and Eve ate that fruit, they began to die, and they passed their sin and death onto every human who has ever lived since. There is nothing any of us can do to save our lives. We are born sinners and have only to look forward to an eternity of separation from God.



But just because we have sinned doesn’t mean that God no longer wants a relationship with us. It just means that He has to do all the work of reconciliation. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth as one of us. He was put to death on the cross, dying the sinner’s death even though He had no sin. Because He had no sins of His own to pay for, He could take on Himself the punishment for our sins. All we need to do is believe that His sacrifice was all-sufficient.

Once we’ve understood the position our sin put us in and made the choice to accept His sacrifice, our relationship with God is restored. We are reconciled with Him and no longer have the issue of sin between us.

This might make sense to you. If we were born in sin, that means we were born separated from God. So why does trusting Christ *restore* us? How can we be restored to a condition we’ve never experienced?

Our restoration is to the condition God intended for us. Paul makes it clear that we were, in a sense, in the garden with Adam when he sinned. *By one man’s offence death reigned by one (Rom. 5:17)*. Adam’s choice to disobey affected us long before we were around to make wrong choices on our own (which we all do).

But if Adam’s sin separated us from God, Christ’s righteousness reconciles believers to Him. Just as we were present when Adam sinned, we were also present when Christ died and rose again. His death was our death. His resurrected life becomes our resurrected life when we trust Him.

God the Father becomes our Father. In Him, we have all the blessings He gives to His own Son.

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



The list of these blessings could take up several lessons. Here are some from that same letter Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus.

- We are holy and blameless before Him (v. 4).
- We have all the rights and privileges of a son (v. 5).
- We have complete forgiveness of our sins—past, present, and future (v. 7) (Although this does not give us license to sin—Rom. 3:8).
- We have all the benefits of the total outpouring of His grace (v. 7).
- We have the revelation of His will for us through Scripture (v. 9).
- We have an inheritance in heaven forever (v. 11).
- We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit to guarantee our salvation until we get to heaven (v. 13-14).
- We have His power available to us (v. 19).
- We have membership in the Body of Christ, the church, made up of all those who trust Him (v. 22-23).

That's pretty good for a worm, don't you think?

When we realize we have no power to save ourselves from the penalty for our sin, we turn to Christ and trust that He has paid the penalty for us. When that happens, we immediately are reconciled with God and receive all the blessings listed above. And when we realize what all those blessings mean, what then?

What should our response be when we realize that we've gone from a position of complete hopelessness to one of being treated like a son of God? Paul answered that question for the Ephesians.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

We are restored to the place where God intended humans to be when He created them. And not just the place. We are restored to the purpose God created us for—to do good works.

We don't do good works in order to earn our salvation. We don't do them to keep our salvation either. We don't do them out of any sort of obligation, except the obligation of thanksgiving. They are the only way we can demonstrate our appreciation for what God has done for us.

We also do good works because, once we are saved, we understand that good works are the reason we were created. Doing good works is the only way we can realize our potential to be everything we can be on this earth.

We don't do good works because we have to, but because we want to. They are our choice. We still have free will, just as we did before we were saved. But now we use that free will to choose to do what God wants us to do.

There are those, even some who fully understand what God offers through His Son, who reject the offer and choose to do things their own way. The Bible calls these people fools.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1).

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7).

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21-22).

That's the choice that every human has to make—to accept God's plan of salvation, enter into a relationship with Him, and have an eternity of blessings as a privileged son, or reject God's plan and be a fool.

We've been talking as though you have realized your need for Christ and placed your trust in Him. But have you?

We've been talking as though you understand what it means to be a son of God with all the benefits. But do you?

We've been talking as though you will want to respond to His grace and forgiveness by doing good works. But will you?

Please don't be foolish. God loves you and wants a relationship with you. He's already done all the work. All you have to do is trust.



TRUST

Home-goings

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

For the believer, the Word of God says, “to die is gain.” Death is a promotion to something better, to the very presence of Christ. For the believer’s life, Christ is the journey and Christ is our destination. Death is gain because we’ll be home with the Savior forever. Two men, Clay Beck and David Hobbs, have recently gone home to be with their Savior, they could say with our apostle: “For to me to live is Christ.” They both devoted their lives to the service of their Savior, and lived so others might know Him and the salvation that is in Christ alone.



Clay Beck: Brother Clay was known as “Texas Clay,” and as you might guess, Clay was from Texas. Texas Clay stood uncompromisingly for the truth of Paul’s gospel. We’re told that the Lord used his life to share the gospel of grace with 5-10 people every day for 40 years after he trusted Christ—more than 100,000 souls! He also led many believers to a deeper understanding of the grace of God as revealed to the Apostle Paul. Texas Clay often shared the truth with others using C.R. Stam’s booklet, *The Love of Christ*. Pastor Stam included a picture of him and a little testimony about him on page 68 of the *50th Anniversary Memorial of the Berean Bible Society* book. I have many boyhood memories of Texas Clay at *Rocky Mountain Grace Camp*. He was one of a kind. He would ask you questions and challenge you with your knowledge of the Scriptures no matter what your age was. Once you met Texas, you never forgot him. He was a man of God who was faithful to the Lord. Please keep Brother Clay’s family before the throne of grace.



David Hobbs: Pastor David Hobbs was pastor of *Victory Bible Chapel and Stables* in Apollo, Pennsylvania. Pastor Hobbs had a big heart. He loved his family, loved the people of God, and he loved the lost and faithfully shared the gospel with them. A testimony about Pastor Hobbs on *Facebook* says a lot about him: “You were a man who feared the Lord and was not afraid to share the good news of Jesus Christ.” Pastor Hobbs and his wife Sandy often made their horse farm available to *Bible Doctrines To Live By* for their Cowboy Camps. I visited Pastor Hobbs and Sandy at their home once when I was in Pennsylvania visiting family. Our children rode horses and afterwards I sat in Pastor Hobbs’s living room. All he wanted to talk about was the Word of God. He truly loved the Word rightly divided, especially the book of Titus. Pastor Hobbs and *Victory Bible Chapel* were also the first pastor and church to commit to give regularly as a church to our *Transformed by Grace* television ministry. This meant a lot to me personally. Please keep Pastor Hobbs’s wife, Sandy, his family, and his church in your prayers.

Question Box

“Why should we fear God (2 Cor. 7:1)?”

Our apostle Paul says we should be “perfecting holiness *in the fear of God.*” Christians needn’t fear that God will take away our salvation if we *don’t* perfect holiness in our lives, for we are saved and eternally secure (Rom. 8:35-39). But Paul says to “work out your own salvation *with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12) because we must never forget the *majesty* of the God who gave us our salvation.

Consider that when God appeared on Mt. Sinai, “all the people that was in the camp *trembled*” (Ex. 19:16). God was not angry with His people here, so it was not His wrath that induced their terror. It was the thunder and lightning and the “exceeding loud” voice of God, the manifestations of His majesty, that struck such fear in their hearts. God is not angry with us either, but we should be just as mindful of His awesomeness, from what we know of Him in His Word, even though we cannot see or hear the physical manifestations of His majesty.

We might compare how every time an angel appears to men in the Bible, the first words out of his mouth are usually “fear not” (Matt. 28:4,5; Luke 1:12,13; 2:9,10, etc.) That’s because angels are so awesome in appearance that men naturally *cower* before them. Well, if they cower before angels, and angels are mere *creations* of Almighty God, how much more would we fear the Creator Himself were we to be able to see *Him*.

BBS founder Pastor C. R. Stam used to compare our fear of God to an invitation you might receive to dine with the president. While you would delight to go, you would no doubt go with fear and trembling. Not fear of what he might do to you, but out of respect for his office, and fear that you might disappoint him with your conduct and perhaps, in the extreme, even disgrace your family name. Likewise, we are not afraid of what God might do to us if we work out our own salvation poorly, but we fear disappointing Him, or disgracing *His* name by our conduct (cf. Neh. 5:9).

Finally, you might also compare how a husband who has a godly wife *fears* to hurt her—not because he is afraid she’ll leave him, for she has vowed she never will. But rather because he is afraid to presume on her grace by grieving her. Similarly, God would never leave us, but we don’t want to presume on His grace by grieving the very Spirit that seals us (Eph. 4:30).
—Pastor Kurth



BBS Letter Excerpts

From our Inbox:

“I just received the newest *Berean Searchlight*, and I saw the message regarding your television ministry. Seriously exciting stuff! I have been keenly interested in this since hearing of it, as my first exploration of dispensationalism, such as is put forward by your organization, was via an online video platform (YouTube), (at first I was mostly against it, by the way).”

From Florida:

“We got the biggest surprise...we were watching Les Feldick...till 6... when this guy started talking about right division. I said, ‘Boy, listen to him, I wonder who he is.’ Well, to my surprise, it was Pastor Sadler...we will be tuned in from now on!”

From our Inbox:

“*Our Heavenly Inheritance*. Wonderful, wonderful program. I was unclear as to where I would spend eternity: earth, heaven or other. Your program couldn’t have been more clear. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Pastor Kevin Sadler and *Berean Bible Society*.”

From Alabama:

“I called Mrs...this morning and she was thrilled to talk. She said that she would be coming to see us, and one of her daughters was also learning right division. So thank you for giving us her name.” (A connection made through our Fellowship File. –Ed.)

From Florida:

“My four-year Bachelor’s is almost over...I’ve used *Searchlight* articles in my papers before, and your FAQ book is a major part of a fifteen-page research paper this semester on the apostolic gifts.”

From California:

“I continue to be blessed by your *Berean Searchlight*...you have given me hope when I didn’t have any, and your ministry has put me on the mountaintop.”

From South Dakota:

“A humble, heartfelt thank you for all of your kindness in Christ in sending me...your teachings the past two years. The revelation of ‘rightly dividing’ the holy Scriptures has most definitely dispelled my former confusion as to the dispensations, and of to whom the good Lord...directed to do what, where and when.”

From New Jersey:

“Although I have been a believer for many years, I am a fairly recent Dispensational Grace convert. Years ago, I attended Bible college and then seminary, but I only completed half of the required seminary coursework for my degree before withdrawing. I have never been completely satisfied with some of the explanations given at either Bible college, seminary or church. Since discovering the BBS website, however, my faith along with my enthusiasm for the Bible have been rejuvenated.”

From Missouri:

“Dave Stewart’s February, 2018, ‘Grace Confession’ article was very good. Dave clearly showed with Scriptures the difference between King David’s confession and the grace confession for this age. Excellent article. Pastor Ken Lawson’s May, 2018, ‘Pentecost—Was it the Birthday of the Church?’ article was also absolutely awesome. It was clear and Scriptural. I learned much from the article.”

From Michigan:

“This *Two Minutes* [“In His Service”] couldn’t have come at a better time. I so needed to be reminded of these truths, as I am sometimes too quick to forget. This reminder is convicting and uplifting, and I want to thank and praise the Lord for his love, mercy and grace for me when I think sometimes about how there’s nothing about me to love. I am currently studying in Galatians and using your commentary. Very helpful!”

From Missouri:

“I am excited that Aaron Harris is now on board. It is great to see younger men taking up the mantle. God bless him in the mail room there among his other duties.” (Aaron makes four active pastors who now fill positions here at BBS! –Ed.)

From our Inbox:

“Hello! A small group of us meet regularly and are going over Stam’s *Things That Differ* book. We are super excited to study God’s Word in its proper context/dispensation, and have all grown tremendously in our understanding of who this God of grace is!!! We do have a question, however, that none of us seem to be able to find the answer to...”

From our Inbox:

“Pastor Kurth! Thank you so much for your audio sermons through the letters of Apostle Paul! I’m learning a lot, I’m understanding his writings better.”

From Holland:

“Thanks for your help. They could not give me these answers here in the Netherlands.”

From Arkansas:

“I feel the need to write and thank whoever spent the time to create the article about the ending of speaking in tongues and the sign gifts. It was so very well presented and with the approach of full disclosure from full Scripture in full context. I cannot express how well it answered my questions...I have several close friends who are of the belief of present sign gifts...This information you have provided will give me a great outline to learn what I need to finish a good witness.”

From Maryland:

“I want to thank BBS for organizing the Bible conference at Solomons Island, MD, on August 17 and 18. I live close and am planning to attend.”


From Alaska:

“Just shooting you guys a note to say how much we enjoyed the South Central Bible Conference here in Alaska. So thankful for Ricky Kurth, Ken Lyon and Don Webb taking the time to come up here and for all they shared and taught. It was great getting to know them, and I know the rest of the Homer group (*Grace Bible Church*) feels the same way as we do.” (You couldn’t have made us feel more at home! –Ed.)



“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

STEPS TO GETTING MORE BBS ON **Roku**

- 1 Press the **Home** button  on your Roku remote.



- 2 Scroll up or down and select **Streaming Channels** to open the Channel Store. Scroll down and select **Search Channels** then type in "Berean Bible".



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- 4 After adding the Berean Bible Society Channel, it will be in the list of channels under **Home** on the main screen. Scroll down, it will have been added to the bottom of the list of channels.

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- 1 Launch the **App Store** app from your Home screen.



- 2 Move over to the **Search** tab on the end and type in "Berean Bible".



- 3 Click on the BBS Network app icon, then click the **Get** button to download the app for free. Then click the **Get** button on the next page to confirm download.



- 4 To launch it, go back to the **Home** screen and swipe up, down, left, or right on the touchpad until you reach the BBS Network app. Click on the app to launch it.





News and Announcements

North Carolina Meetings: Our next BBS Regional Meeting (a conference sponsored by BBS) will be held October 5-7 at the *Quality Inn & Suites* in Winston-Salem. Here's your chance to see BBS's own Pastor Kevin Sadler as well as Pastor Jeff Bertram of *Old Bethel Bible Church* of Alpha, Kentucky, away from their natural habitat! Our good friend Randy Foulke will be happy to fill in all the details about this special time of grace preaching and fellowship: (919) 851-8530, randy.railfan@gmail.com.

Grace Gospel Publishers is a printing concern that has stood firmly for Paul's gospel since 1961, and it is our privilege to heartily recommend them to our *Searchlight* readers. You can check out their website at www.gracegospelpublishers.org, and peruse the many Bible study materials they have to offer. Be sure to tell our good friend Ron Achtyes that BBS sent ya!

Looking for Fellowship in Manitoba: Our new friend Larry Wiebe has written to tell us that his family is one of three families who would love to hear from other grace believers in their area! They are located about 14 miles north of the United States border town of Niche, North Dakota, and they assure us that U.S. citizens would be as welcome as the maple leaves of May. For further information, you can contact Larry at graceupongrace2017@outlook.com.

Your Final Arrangements: Three cemetery plots in Northlake, Illinois, have been donated to BBS with the intent that they be sold to provide funding for our ministry. If you live in the vicinity of this Chicago suburb, you can easily spend more than the \$600 we are asking for each burial plot. If you'd like to see your \$1800 help the Lord's work in the process, contact BBS Business Manager, Pastor Jim Tollar, at (262) 255-4750 or at berean@bereanbiblesociety.org, during normal business hours.

Our Front Cover Lighthouse: People are asking where the description of our cover lighthouse has gone! If you're one of the ones who are looking for it, we're happy to announce that we didn't abandon it, we just moved it from the bottom of this page to a spot inside the front cover.

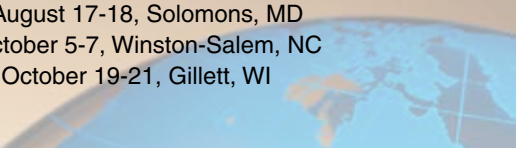
UPCOMING CONFERENCES TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

Bitely Bible Conference, August 3-5, Bitely MI

BBS Regional Conference, August 17-18, Solomons, MD

BBS Regional Conference, October 5-7, Winston-Salem, NC

NGYC Fall Youth Retreat, October 19-21, Gillett, WI



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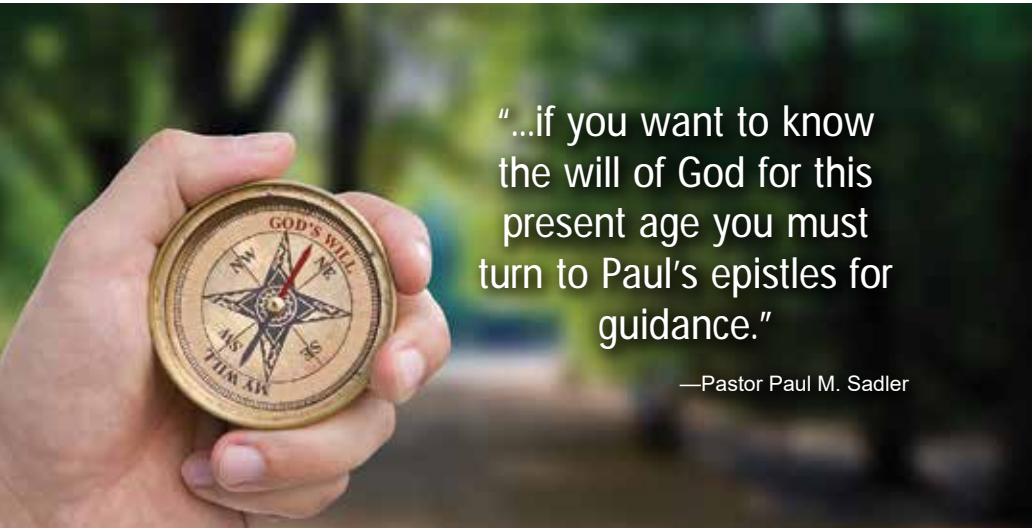
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turn to Paul's epistles for
guidance."

—Pastor Paul M. Sadler