

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT™

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2018



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This month’s front cover is the Jafa Light in Tel-Aviv Yafo, Israel.

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.

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From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

If you are like most grace believers, you are constantly on the lookout for new ways to share the gospel with the lost and the grace message with the saints. If so, you may want to order a copy of my book, *Rightly Divided Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*.

The very first question addressed in the book is, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). I answer with a detailed presentation of the plan of salvation, and then answer questions about things that sinners *don't* have to do to be saved—things like praying "the sinner's prayer," asking Jesus into your heart, or making Him the Lord of your life. Then the book gets into questions about salvation that grace believers often ask, like whether a sinner can be saved when the gospel is presented from John 3:16, and whether believers today are born again.

The book then moves on to questions about eternal security, addressing the problems presented by troublesome verses like Matthew 7:22,23, 12:31,32, 24:13, Luke 8:13, Romans 11:22, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 15:1,2, Galatians 5:4, 5:19-21, Philippians 3:11 and Colossians 1:21-23. Many people are literally *haunted* by these verses, and putting this volume in their hands will expose them to an in-depth study of the eternal nature of our salvation. Once the book finishes examining salvation from all of these angles, the unsaved reader has unwittingly been exposed to a very thorough presentation of the gospel, and believers are better equipped to present it accurately.

Then, when it comes to presenting the grace message to believers, many of God's people have questions about water baptism and spiritual gifts. As you know, we have the only consistent answers to these questions, and believers who *like* the answers I present just might be encouraged to embrace our message!

Finally, if you know people who are considering the grace message but are stumbling over verses that seem to challenge it, this book will help them get past verses like Acts 17:11, 26:22, Romans 1:1,2, 16:7, 1 Corinthians 15:11, Galatians 1:23, Ephesians 3:3-5 and Hebrews 13:8. In addition, our comments on these verses will also sharpen your ability to *defend* our message when these verses are used to deny the truth that we hold dear.

Response to the book has been so good, we had to order a second printing a month after the first edition debuted. But buy as many as you like, we'll print more! See the special offer on page 29 to order your copy today and see what God can do with yet another tool for His work provided to you by your partners in the ministry here at *Berean Bible Society*.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Ricky Kurth



Did Christ Suffer in HELL?

The simple answer to this question is no.

The erroneous teaching goes like this: After His crucifixion, the Lord's body was placed in a tomb, and His spirit went to hell. There He suffered all the torments of hell that we would have suffered. But Satan, death, and hell could not hold Him. Acts 2:24-27 is used to support this position: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning Him...Therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad...Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." It is taught that because Christ was not Himself deserving of punishment, the Lord was resurrected from hell and the grave by the power of God. Some will even go so far as to say that you have to believe that Christ suffered in hell to be saved.

This is a dangerous doctrine. It is actually an attack against the Cross of Christ. The word "hell" in Acts 2:27 is translated from the Greek word *hades*. Hades is in the center of the earth. At the time of Christ's death, it had two compartments: Abraham's bosom and torment. We see this in the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. After they died, Lazarus was in paradise in Abraham's bosom (v. 22). The rich man was "in hell [hades]...in torments" (v. 23).

Christ *fully* faced the judgment of God against our sins upon His Cross during the three hours of worldwide darkness (Luke 23:44). As He did, Christ experienced the realities of hell *at the Cross*: separation from the Father, darkness, torment, thirst, and the fire of God's wrath against sin. He was our blessed Substitute at the Cross; He paid sin's penalty for us and took God's wrath in our place. When Christ cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He meant that the payment for sin was complete and paid in full. To say that Christ also needed to suffer the penalty for sin in hell for three days and three nights is to teach otherwise.

For three days and three nights our Lord was in the center of the earth (Matt. 12:40). We learn where His soul went after He died when He told the believing thief on the cross beside Him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). He did *not* go to hell when He died. He did *not* suffer in torment in hades. His spirit descended into the paradise section of hades where the spirit of the penitent thief went also. Three days later, He rose again from the dead, triumphant over sin and death! —Pastor Kevin Sadler



In the Footsteps **OF CHRIST**

*Garden of Gethsemane, Pool of Bethesda,
Wailing Wall, Garden Tomb*

PASTOR KEVINSADLER
President

GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Our tour of Israel this past May came to a conclusion by spending the last four days in Jerusalem. One of our first stops was to visit the Garden of Gethsemane. This was a very powerful and sobering place. As you walk among the olive trees at the base of the Mount of Olives, you think deeply about the Lord being there fervently praying in the hours before He was crucified. You feel a range of emotions from sorrow, to anger, to gratitude. You feel anger when you think of Judas leading a band of men to arrest the Lord in the Garden and betraying Him with a kiss. I thought of how when the men entered the garden with lanterns, torches, and weapons,

“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground” (John 18:4-6).

It made me grateful for my Savior, the great I AM, in knocking them to the ground by the power of His spoken word, and how this shows that they didn’t take Him, He *willingly* went with them and *willingly* went to the Cross.

Throughout the tour, we had earpieces that enabled us to hear the tour guide. In the Garden, our tour guide had us sit down while she quietly read the account of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was a powerful spiritual moment to close your eyes and prayerfully listen to these words in your ear:

“And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him...And He was withdrawn from

them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done....And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:39,41,42,44).

VIA DOLOROSA

The next day, we were thrilled to enter through one of the city gates and walk the streets of Jerusalem. There were vendors everywhere along the street selling bread, candy, dried fruits, souvenirs, knick-knacks, clothing, etc. On one of the days in Jerusalem, we walked the Via Dolorosa. Our tour guide informed us that there is a Catholic Golgotha and a Protestant Golgotha. The Via Dolorosa is the walkway from the Antonia Fortress to the Catholic Golgotha at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Along the way, there are different stations of the Cross marked where Christ supposedly fell and people helped Him. This agitated me as I saw the stations where He fell, because the Bible *never* says that Christ fell on the way to Calvary! In my mind, it made my Savior appear weak, when He is not weak. Of course, Christ experienced the pain and natural weakness that accompanied His brutal scourging, but He never fell on the way to the Cross.

We saw a lot of stray cats in Jerusalem. This one was sitting so prim and proper on the Via Dolorosa I had to take a picture of it. I never saw a stray dog in Jerusalem.



Arriving at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a Roman Catholic Church, we found everything conveniently in one building. As you enter the main entrance, there are stairs to the right leading to the Catholic Golgotha, where it is thought that Christ died on the Cross.

Walking back down the stairs we saw a sight that at first we couldn't understand. People were throwing themselves onto a stone pavement on the floor. They



were crying, bowing before it, touching it, pressing their faces against it, wiping handkerchiefs on it and then wiping the handkerchief on their faces. All of us wanted the tour guide to explain, and she told us that this supposedly was the stone where Christ's body was laid when He was taken down from the Cross. She said that people believe they'll receive a blessing by touching it. It was religion in action. I felt my heart stirred as I watched it, and not in a good way. In their religion, mankind loves relics to be able to touch and worship. Instead of faith alone in Christ's finished work, we

often saw religion, tradition, relics, and ritual.

The next room contained the tomb where Catholics believe Christ's body was laid and where He rose again. The line was so long, we would have been there half a day to be able to walk through it to see it.



LION'S GATE AND POOL OF BETHESDA

We started the next day at the Lion's Gate. This didn't mean much until the tour guide told us that the gate was also known as St. Stephen's Gate, the gate it is believed that Stephen was taken through to be stoned to death outside the city walls. You never saw cameras go up so fast for us grace pastors and grace believers! This is a significant place for Gentiles under grace. Here is where Israel fell in their unbelief, after which God turned to the Gentiles in grace. Here is where Saul held the garments of those who stoned Stephen. I stood there grateful that here I am in Jerusalem, a Gentile saved by the grace of God, with a relationship with the living God, having a home in heaven, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, because of God in His grace choosing to have a program with the Gentiles.



Right inside the Lion's Gate is the Pool of Bethesda. I have so many "favorite" things in the Bible I lose track of them all! One of my favorite accounts in the Lord's earthly ministry is the healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. I appreciated being able to see the place where this miracle took place. Bethesda means "house of mercy," and John 5:4 teaches how God in His mercy toward Israel had an angel stir the water of the pool from time to time, and whoever was first into the water "was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." Thus, there was "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water" (5:3). This is why there are many hospitals named "Bethesda."



The Lord, in keeping the law, was in Jerusalem for a feast day, and He visited the Pool of Bethesda. Stop and picture that in your mind. Christ in His love and mercy walking among the sick, the infirmed, and the hurting. He cared about them all. He still does care about those who are sick and hurting. That day Christ made Bethesda a house of mercy by His personal presence.



Christ saw a lame man at the pool, who had been lame for 38 years, and He asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (5:6). That is a great question we can ask those who do not believe, who need the Savior and salvation from their sins, "Do you want to be made whole?" Today, Christ makes people whole spiritually by faith alone in His finished work (Rom. 4:5).

The lame man didn't understand that the Lord could make him whole. Instead he began explaining that he didn't have anyone to help him get into the water first when the water was stirred (John 5:7). Your heart goes out to him as you read that! The Great Physician then responded, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked..." (5:8-9). Christ saw his need; He knew the depth of that need, and He took the initiative to meet that need. It's the same with each one of us in our great need of salvation, and Christ meeting that need by His Cross and resurrection.

SOUTHERN WALL EXCAVATIONS

Near the end of the tour, we got on the bus and our tour guide said that we were going to be visiting the southern wall excavations. After many days of touring, you get kind of worn out. I was tired that day and not knowing what this meant I wasn't too enthused about seeing these excavations. But after this day was over, I wrote in the journal I was keeping, "It was an incredible day! One of the best of the tour."



As we stood there looking at Jerusalem's southern wall excavations, our tour guide began telling us all kinds of amazing things rapid fire. The pavement we were looking at was from the time of Christ. The Lord likely walked on that pavement when He visited the temple. She pointed out these huge boulders that were stones hurled down by Roman soldiers at the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Next, she showed us the storefronts from the time of Christ that were used for the selling of lambs and doves for sacrifice in the temple.



Then she pointed up to what would have been considered the pinnacle of the temple mount. This was a busy section of Jerusalem in the time of the Lord, and from this high point in the temple is where trumpets were blown and announcements were made. It is likely here where Satan took the Lord "up into the holy city, and setting Him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for

it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone” (Matt. 4:5-6).

The devil quoted Psalm 91:11-12 and used this Scripture to tempt the Lord. Don’t let it escape your notice that the devil used Scripture. Even today, he misuses it to tempt and deceive. Satan tempted the Lord to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple into this busy courtyard of the temple, and by the angels gathering Him in their arms so that He’d come down to a nice, soft landing, He would demonstrate to all that He was Israel’s Messiah and the Son of God. Christ’s response was, “It is written...Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:7). To have tested the Father in this way would have been to question the Father’s love, not prove it. Christ came to do the Father’s will and this was not it. The Father’s will was the Cross. Christ would demonstrate beyond a doubt that He was the Messiah and the Son of God by His death and resurrection.

We next walked around the corner and came to some stone steps. As we gathered around, we were told this story by our tour guide:

When American astronaut Neil Armstrong, a devout Christian, visited Israel after his trip to the moon, he was taken on a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem by Israeli archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov. When they got to the Hulda Gate, which is at the top of the stairs leading to the Temple Mount, Armstrong asked Ben-Dov whether Jesus had stepped anywhere around there. “I told him, ‘Look, Jesus was a Jew,’” recalled Ben-Dov. “These are the steps that lead to the Temple, so

He must have walked here many times.” Armstrong then asked if these were the original steps, and Ben-Dov confirmed that they were. “So Jesus stepped right here?” asked Armstrong. “That’s right,” answered Ben-Dov. “I have to tell you,” Armstrong said to the Israeli archaeologist, “I am more excited stepping on these stones than I was stepping on the moon.”¹

That’s the way it is in Jerusalem. You walk in the footsteps of the Creator of the Universe, our Savior, God in flesh. The

significance of this weighs heavily on your heart and it makes you so thankful to be there.





WAILING WALL

Our tour guide told us this on our way to the Wailing Wall: A foreigner once visited Jerusalem. He hailed a taxi. Getting in, the driver asked him where he wanted to go. The man replied, “Take me to that place in Jerusalem where everybody cries.” The taxi driver said, “Okay,” and then he dropped him off at a tax office.

The Western Wall is on the backside of the temple. When the temple stood, it faced the east, and the presence of God in the Holy of Holies was closest to the Western Wall. This is why it is such a significant place for the Jews. Of course, they pray at the Wailing Wall, but they also read and study the law and celebrate bar mitzvahs there. The Wailing Wall is divided between men’s and women’s sections. You must have your head covered to approach the wall. They will give you a free yarmulke if you’re not wearing a hat. I learned that yarmulkes are worn by Jewish men as a symbol of submission. They put it at the highest point of their body to picture their recognition that God is over them.

As I stood back looking at all the Jews at the Wailing Wall, the Apostle Paul’s deep love and desire for his countrymen to be saved came to mind: “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites... Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Rom. 9:3-4; 10:1). It made me think that to follow Paul as he followed Christ, we too should have a burden for Jewish people to be saved.

I went up to the wall, but I didn’t need to wail or press myself up against it to pray and feel closer to the Lord. As believers in Christ, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we have free access to God the Father at all times through the shed blood of our Savior! If you think about it, that wall is a wall of unbelief. Those who practice Judaism reject Jesus Christ and put themselves under law, when we are under grace (Rom. 6:14).

THE GARDEN TOMB

We also visited the Protestant location of Golgotha. We had a different tour guide for this location. We often sang together as a group





on the bus or at different sites. As we gathered and waited for our guide in the garden, our group broke into singing, “In the Garden.”

The tour guide at “The Garden Tomb” led us to a place that is thought to possibly be Golgotha, the place of a skull (Mark 15:22). Looking at it from the side, I didn’t see a skull. But if you look at a picture of it straight on, you can

see the eyes, nose, and what looks like a skull. Evidence of executions and crucifixions have been found in this area. It was along a busy road that led into the old city, and often the Romans would have crucifixions on busy roads so people could see what happens to those who broke Rome’s laws.

We don’t know for sure if this is the place of the Lord’s crucifixion. But as with the other places we visited in Israel, just knowing we were in the general area was very meaningful. What was also meaningful to me at this place was that our tour guide at the Garden Tomb gave a clear gospel presentation. I appreciated this very much after seeing so much religion and unbelief in Christ in Israel. I shook his hand and thanked him for it. He was a retired man from the United States, who, as a ministry, works at the Garden Tomb just to be able to share the gospel.



In the same area of the Protestant Golgotha, a tomb was discovered that had been carved out of the rock. Again, this was likely not the tomb of the Lord, but it was a reminder of what the Lord’s tomb might have looked like. It was interesting to go in and see a tomb hewn out of the rock.

Our group left the tomb area to go to a place to have a communion service together. There was another group coming, but they hadn’t arrived yet. So I took the opportunity to sit alone by this empty tomb just to think for a while. It gave me the chance to pray and thank the Lord for dying for me and rising again the third day. I also thanked Him for the opportunity to be in Israel and experience all that I had. I hope that you’ll be able to join us as we walk “in the footsteps of Christ” next May 7-16, 2019!



1. www.tabletmag.com/scroll/110296/neil-armstrong-walks-on-jerusalem.

PAUL'S KIND OF CHURCH

PASTOR PAULSADLER
Former BBS President

(From the December, 2004 *Berean Searchlight*)

It seems as though everyone these days is looking for the perfect church. Some years ago *Our Daily Bread* published the following account: A man reportedly came to the British pastor, Charles H. Spurgeon, looking for the perfect church. The famous preacher told him he had many saintly people in his congregation, but a “Judas” could also be among them. After all, even Jesus had a traitor in the company of His apostles. He went on to say that some might be walking disobediently, as had been the case among the believers at Rome, Corinth, and Galatia.

“My church is not the one you’re looking for,” said Spurgeon. “But if you should happen to find such a church, I beg you not to join it, for you would spoil the whole thing.”

The local church will never be perfect on this side of glory, simply because disobedience and carnality are always in attendance with grace and love. If you have ever attended a congregational meeting where opposing sides were having a heated discussion over a thorny issue, you probably tried to leave early to avoid being tarred and feathered. Attending these types of congregational meetings is not for the faint of heart. It reminds us of the old saying, “To dwell above with saints we love, oh that will sure be glory. But to dwell below with saints we know, well, that’s another story!” Interestingly, this statement touches the very heart of the matter. In fact, it’s why the local church is so essential to the plans and purposes of God, as we will see...

I have had the privilege, by the grace of God, to pastor three grace churches. The experience was invaluable, and as I look back, while I didn’t realize it at the time, the Lord was preparing me for the position I presently hold at the *Berean Bible Society*. During those years of my pulpit ministry, I learned the importance of patterning my ministry after the Apostle Paul. Essentially I sought to emulate what the apostle did when he planted a local church. In fact, did he not instruct us along these lines to do this very thing?

“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

What have we “learned” from Paul? If we carefully study his three apostolic journeys, we find that Paul’s proclamation of the Word of God was the basis for both the establishment and growth of the local church. Everywhere the apostle went he opened the Scriptures to the people, and they responded with grateful hearts. We’ll allow the biblical record to speak for itself:

First Apostolic Journey, Antioch in Pisidia: “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God” (Acts 13:44). Iconium: “Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the Word of His grace” (Acts 14:3). Lystra and Derbe: “And there they preached the gospel” (Acts 14:7).

Second Apostolic Journey, Thessalonica: “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:2,3). Corinth: “And he [Paul] continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them” (Acts 18:11).

Third Apostolic Journey, Ephesus: “And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). Troas: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

Today, the sound preaching of the Word has been replaced in most local assemblies with alternative worship services and marketing schemes to build a popular church that everyone wants to attend. There is rarely a month that goes by that I don’t have a colorful brochure come across my desk on Church Growth Programs. Sadly, the church growth movement has relegated the Word of God to a secondary role in favor of song services, skits, films, and testimonials. This concept is merely an attempt to draw larger audiences with the idea that “bigger is better.” If they provide more social functions and innovative programs, they’ll be better equipped to meet the needs of the community. It’s a lofty goal, but a flawed concept.

The problem here is this: when the church across town announces they’re building a new gym or they plan to have a contemporary worship service with gifted musicians, probably before long many of your people will be going to this new venue. It wouldn’t be the first time a local assembly was left with a small handful of people and a large mortgage. Unfortunately, all of this is at the expense of the Word of God, which is the very thing that will minister to the needs of the people.

The temptation is very real for local churches to go along with the trends of the day, but is it our desire to please men or God? Many church boards are fearful that if Paul’s apostleship and message are proclaimed in their fullness, it may upset someone and drive them

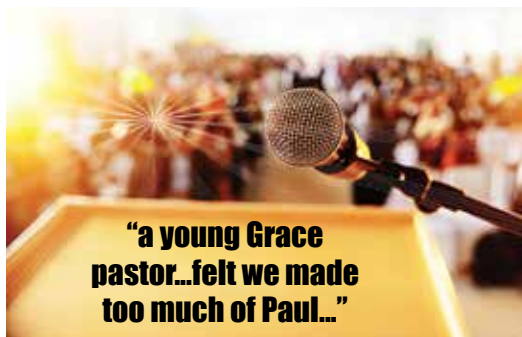
away! I remember several years ago I was on the platform with a young Grace pastor who spent the first ten minutes of his message apologizing for Paul's apostleship. He felt we made too much of Paul and that we need to tone it down in the Grace Movement or we were going to offend people. I'm sure most of his comments were for my benefit, but he was speaking to the wrong person. I came out of the confusion of denominationalism years ago, and I have no intention of returning, as this young man was suggesting. I thank God without ceasing that I've been set free from the bondage of tradition, and I'm going to tell anyone who's willing to listen that they, too, can be delivered if they acknowledge Paul's gospel.

Beloved ones, Paul is God's spokesman for the Church today; thus, to speak disparagingly of God's apostle is to reject the counsel of God itself. Paul's epistles reveal the mind and will of God for the Body of Christ during this dispensation. Shall we apologize for the Word of God that has been delivered to us by

our apostle? I think not!! While we should speak the truth in love, the truth is offensive (Gal. 5:11 cf. Eph. 4:15). I recall the first time someone told me I was a hell-deserving sinner—I was offended by that statement! But I thank God that I was offended, because through the process I got saved. We must be very careful not to remove the "offense of the Cross" by sugarcoating our words with flowery platitudes, which can condemn men to perdition.

One of the purposes of the local church is to provide an atmosphere where the Word of God can be received with thanksgiving. The preaching of the Word must be the centerpiece of our worship of Almighty God. True worship begins with God being glorified in the teaching of His Word. It is then enhanced by the singing of hymns, spiritual songs, prayer, and testimonials. For the most part, this order has been reversed in our churches today, which has left the Lord's people floundering spiritually in their Christian lives.

When we speak here of preaching the Word, we are not referring to a 12-minute devotional message on Sunday morning, which has little profit. Rather, whenever we gather around the Word to worship, the preferable way to open the Scriptures is to do a verse-by-verse exposition of a particular book, such as the Book of Romans. We believe this is the most profitable and effective way to teach the Scriptures. Remember, Paul reasoned with his hearers, he alleged, he taught them the Word of life. Whatever format you use, "preach the Word," and the Lord's people will respond as those at Thessalonica did to Paul's preaching.



Question Box

“Why does Paul beseech the Corinthians to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20) if they were already justified ‘saints’ (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11)?”

“...be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

In this verse, Paul is not telling the Corinthians to be reconciled to God, he is telling them what to tell unbelievers.

If we back up to verse 18, we see Paul tell the believers in Corinth that God “hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” He then goes on to *define* the ministry of reconciliation when he begins the very next verse with the words “to wit.” Those words mean “namely” or “that is to say.” So Paul is telling believers what to say to unsaved people when they go forth with the ministry of reconciliation. We might paraphrase him to say:

“God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, so go out and tell the lost, ‘God was in Christ as He hung on the cross, imputing your trespasses to Him and not to you. He then committed this message of reconciliation to us believers, and now we are His ambassadors. If He were here, He’d be begging you to be reconciled to Him, but He’s not, we’re here in His stead.’”

The Corinthians were already righteous (1 Cor. 1:30), so we know Paul was telling them to tell unsaved people that *they* “might” be made righteous (2 Cor. 5:20) by believing the gospel.
—Pastor Kurth



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www.bereanbiblesociety.org

Includes messages from *Transformed by Grace* by Pastor Kevin Sadler, as well as messages by Pastor Ricky Kurth, and BBS board members.

They're Out There!



Here at *Berean Bible Society*, we are often asked about our unique position on water baptism. We always respond as graciously as we can, and provide such inquirers with articles and videos that they can use to study our position more thoroughly.

Sometimes we can tell from the way the question is worded that the inquirer believes that water baptism is a part of God's program for today, and they are just writing us to indignantly object to our position. We received one such email recently, which read:

"You say you don't believe in water baptism, but to obey the gospel in its entirety means to believe on the gospel of Jesus and be fully immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is clearly stated, in black and white, what a person has to do for remittance of sins!...Why would water baptism not be required when it is plainly in the Scriptures that it is the method of entering into Christ? Even Jesus was water baptized!"

I responded to this dear brother with the same grace with which we reply to more sincere inquiries, although admittedly with less anticipation of a favorable reply. But the very next day, we received this email in response to the information I had sent him:

"Now I realize the error of water baptism! Wow! I've been dunked five times, not knowing that it is not for this dispensation! Thank you dear fellow Christian pastor! I was trusting in water baptism for my salvation, a bit more than in Jesus alone. I repent humbly, and wholeheartedly...I am a youthful 62-year-old who has been through the ringer, searching for the truth...I have believed false preachers on TV, false teachings on the internet, etc., so I decided to look at your Berean website. Someone in years past told me to only trust Bereans. Something inside of me wasn't sitting well with water baptism for salvation. I had to explore your explained teachings—to my delight, to say the least!"

I don't think I've ever seen such a dramatic turnaround from someone who gave the appearance that he would not be open to the truth. We share it with you to encourage you to keep sharing Paul's gospel with anyone and everyone. People like this brother are rare, but they are out there, along with many others who might take a little longer to grasp the truth. You just have to find them. And the only way to find them is to be faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1,2).

—Pastor Kurth



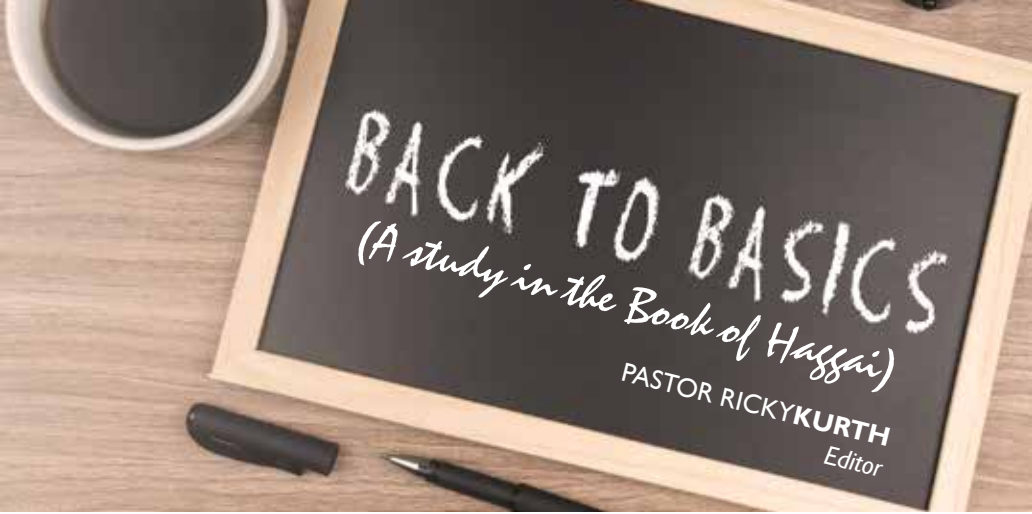
From A to C to E

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thes. 5:18).

The story is told about a man who decided to fly his lighter-than-air balloon all the way around the world. So, on Day 1, he planned to fly from City A to City B. But a wind came along that he hadn't counted on, and he found himself being forced to land in City C. He didn't know much about City C. But that is where he found himself, so he stayed there for a while and discovered that it was a pretty nice place to be. He saw all the sights, enjoyed the people, and made new friends in City C. Then he decided to fly from City C to City D. But another contrary wind came and forced him to land in City E. He didn't even know that City E existed, but there he was. So he met the people, absorbed their culture, looked at all the sights, and made new friends in City E, too. He made his way around the world, not exactly landing everywhere he had planned, landing in different places from time to time, but finding blessings everywhere he went.

Life is a lot like that, isn't it? You may be at A, thinking that you're going to B, but something happens, and suddenly you find yourself at C. That wasn't what you had planned, but you find blessings at C you didn't even know existed. Wherever you are in life, in whatever circumstance, we can thank God. God is at work, and we find blessings to be thankful for in whatever place He brings us in life, and in the things He teaches us in them, and how He brings us closer to Himself by them.

—Pastor Kevin Sadler



BACK TO BASICS

(A study in the Book of Haggai)

PASTOR RICKY KURTH
Editor

A teacher at a school in a really rough neighborhood was teaching her class basic punctuation. She began by asking, “What comes after a sentence?” One young boy raised his hand and answered, “The appeal!”

As we resume our study of the book of Haggai, I remind you that this prophet lived and prophesied during the time in Israel’s history when her people had just finished serving out their 70-year sentence of God’s chastening in Babylon. Upon their return to the promised land, God commanded them to rebuild His temple (Ezra 1:1-3), speaking to them through His “shepherd” King Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). They started the building project well (Ezra 3:8-13), but suddenly they seemed more interested in building nice homes *for themselves* than in rebuilding God’s house (Hag. 1:2-4). That’s when God called on them to *get back to basics*, speaking to them through His prophet Haggai and saying,

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house;

and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD” (Hag. 1:8).

Notice here that the prophet seems to be *simplifying* the path of obedience for His people, giving them some basic, step-by-step instructions. I mean, it doesn’t get any more basic than, “Go to the mountain, chop some wood, and bring it back to build the house.”

I believe the *reason* God was sending them back to basics was that, while they had started work on the temple soon after they returned from Babylon, they had *neglected* the rebuilding project *for the past 14 years*.¹ And when you have been away from serving the Lord for that long a time, a sort of spiritual *paralysis* sets in, and God’s people are often unsure about how to even *begin* to return to serving Him. God knows this, and so patiently told His people in Haggai’s day to start with the basics—to go up to the mountain and gather the lumber that they would need to obey His commandment.

If *you’ve* been away from serving the Lord for awhile, and you’re

feeling that spiritual paralysis, and you're not sure how to get back to serving the Lord, *you too* need to get back to the basics. And it is not hard to know what the basics are today in the dispensation of grace. The very first instruction that the apostle of grace gives us, the very first thing that he tells us to do in his epistles, is...

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:12,13).

In other words, stop doing what's wrong and start doing what's right! If you're thinking, “That's pretty basic,” is it any more basic than “go up to the mountain, get some wood, and bring it back?” If the children of Israel needed to resume the path of obedience by starting with the basics, you probably should too!



“...sin will have a deadening effect on your spiritual life (Rom. 8:13).”

The Motivation of a Nation

Next, God told them that if they would build His house, He would “take pleasure in it” (Hag. 1:8).

Here, of course, God was trying to give His people some *motivation* to obey Him. He knew that *they* knew that if He was pleased with them, He would bless them as He promised (Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14). This promise to take pleasure in their work had to be music to their ears, for it meant that God would not only quit *chastening* them for their *disobedience*, as He had been doing for the past 14 years (Hag. 1:6), He would actually start *blessing* them for their *obedience*, as He had promised.

Then He gave them even *more* incentive to obey Him when He added, “and I will be glorified, saith the LORD” (Hag. 1:8). Here He was asking them to think past not being chastened, to think past being blessed, to think past what obeying God would do *for them* to what it would do *for God*. It glorifies God when His people obey Him, in every dispensation.

And this kind of motivation is something that we today would do well to keep in mind, for it's the only kind of motivation God gives us under grace. He is not chastening us for disobedience today,² and He is not rewarding us with blessing when we obey Him. We've *already* been blessed with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). That means that the *only* motivation to serve the Lord that we have in the dispensation of grace is that *it glorifies Him*. If that's your heart's desire, why not determine to obey Him in all areas of your life?

Looking the Other Way

Now when God's people in Israel ceased obeying Him, you would think that they would have been on the lookout for God's chastening in their lives. Instead, they looked for *the exact opposite*, they looked for *His blessing*, as we see when we read on in our text:

“Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto His own house” (Hag. 1:9).

Under the Law, God had told His people in Israel, “if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD...” (Deut. 28:15), “thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, *and shalt gather but little in...*” (v. 38). So once they ceased hearkening to God's command to rebuild the temple, you'd think that they would have begun to look for “little” in their crops, even if they'd sown “much seed” in their land.

So why did they look for much, if God had told them that disobedience would cause them to bring in little? Somehow they must have thought that they were *obeying* God. But how could they think that failing to rebuild the temple was an act of obedience?

The Motivation for Their Relaxation

The answer lies in *the reason* they quit rebuilding God's house. A few years after King Cyrus had ordered the temple to be built, the *new* king of Persia had ordered them to cease working on it (Ezra 4:21-24), and they knew

that God's people are always supposed to obey the government. So when the king ordered them to cease working on the temple,



and they obeyed him as God's people should obey their leaders in government, they “looked for much” from God, knowing that He always rewarded obedience with prosperity under the Law.

What they should have done instead was remember the exception to the rule. God's people have always understood that we are to obey the government's orders *unless* they order us to do something contrary to *God's* orders. For instance, when the king of Babylon ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to bow to his image, they said, as it were, “No thanks, we'd rather be thrown into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace” (Dan. 3:1-30). So the Hebrews in Haggai's day should have known better than to obey the kings “cease and desist” order that countermanded God's commandment, and then look for God to bless them because of it.

Every Little Bit Didn't Help

Now in spite of God's chastening, His people did bring home a “little,” as the prophet noted (Hag. 1:9). But God reminded

them that “when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it.” Those who knew the Word of God well would have understood that figure of speech, for they would have remembered that “the breath of the LORD” is “like a stream of brimstone” (Isa. 30:33). Elsewhere Isaiah said, “the grass withereth...*because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it*” (Isa. 40:7). So in saying He blew upon what little they brought home in Haggai’s day, God was employing a figure of speech to say that the little money that survived the trip home in that bag of holes (1:6) had gone up in a puff of proverbial smoke!

“Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house” (Hag. 1:9). Now, when we read that they forsook the building of the temple and *ran* to go build nice houses for themselves (cf. 1:2-4), this shows they had a *heart problem*. It shows that they couldn’t *wait* to stop serving the Lord and start serving themselves.

They Followed Their Heart and Look Where it Got Them

It reminds me of the time when God’s people in Israel said,

“When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” (Amos 8:5).

Here we see some Hebrews who were conscientiously observing Israel’s sabbaths (they weren’t conducting any business on the seventh day, or on the observance of the new moon), but

they couldn’t wait for the sabbath to be over so they could get back to making money! That shows that they were outwardly obeying God, *but their heart wasn’t in it*. Just like the brethren in Haggai’s day, who were outwardly obeying God by building the temple, but showed that their heart wasn’t in it when the king ordered the work stopped and they *ran* to build *their own* houses.



These examples remind us that God knows our hearts. He not only knows what you do for Him, *He knows why you do it*. He knows if you are just going through the motions of your faith, or if your heart is really in it. He knows if you want to be in church on Sunday, or if you can’t wait to run home to your own affairs. He knows if you really want to be at midweek Bible study, or if you just go to be seen of men, as those Hebrews who were giving outward regard to the sabbath. “He knoweth the secrets of the heart” (Ps. 44:21), and while you might be pulling the wool over the eyes of men with your outward obedience to the Lord, someday He “will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” at the

Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 4:5). What a reminder of how God doesn't just want your *actions*, He wants your *heart*.

A Rain Check

If you want to know how *thoroughly* God was chastening His people, He went on to say,

“Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit” (Hag. 1:10).

God had warned His people that if they didn't obey Him, He would cut off their rain (Lev. 26:14, 19). But cutting off the rain is one thing; cutting off *the dew* is quite another! I've seen documentaries that showed how people experiencing a drought collected dew by spreading out a large sheet of plastic at night and then funneling the dew that had settled on it into a cup in the morning. Any and all such efforts would have been in vain in Haggai's time, however, for they were “stayed from dew,” and God

“...called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands” (Hag. 1:11).

Now, if you want to talk about a *complete* spanking—that's it! It doesn't get any more thorough than that. You could run from God in those days, but you couldn't hide! His chastening hand was sure to find every one of His people, from the least to the greatest.

Most commentaries on this passage are quick to apply all of

these things to all of us members of the Body of Christ, living today in the dispensation of grace. They say that if we are not healthy and wealthy and prospering that it is because we are being chastened by God. But Romans 6:15 says we are not under the law that stipulated that God would curse His people if they were bad. That means it would be *unrighteous* for God to punish you for breaking a law you never agreed to obey, as the people of Israel had agreed (Ex. 19:7,8; 24:3-7).

For Your Consideration


Because of this, your apostle never tells you to “consider your ways” to see why God has been chastening you, as Haggai did under the law (Hag. 1:5,7). He rather tells us to be “*forgetting* those things which are behind, *and reaching forth unto those things which are before*” (Phil. 3:13). Paul never tells you to think about what you've done and how God might be chastening you for it. He rather exhorts us to think about “whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure... lovely...of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” to “think on *these things*” (Phil. 4:8) and *not* on your spiritual failings and shortcomings. He never says to look at your circumstances to determine what God thinks of you, as Haggai did. Our apostle tells us to *look to Calvary* to see what God thinks of us (Rom. 5:8), to how He loved us enough to send His Son to die for us “while we were yet sinners” and “enemies” (v. 10), and

then decide if we want to serve Him in response to His grace, and not out of a fear of His chastening.

A Gut Check

But that doesn't mean there's no profit for us in Haggai's instruction to "consider your ways," for Paul says that "all scripture... is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16). While you don't have to examine your life to see if God might be chastening you, you need to remember that sin will have a deadening effect on your spiritual life (Rom. 8:13). So if you notice that deadening effect in *your* life, you should definitely do what Haggai said and "Consider your ways." I'm not talking about looking at your circumstances in life for signs that God might be chastening you, as Haggai told God's people to do under the law. I'm talking about looking at *your heart* for signs of the deadening effect of sin. If you find you can't get excited about the things of God, you may want

to consider your ways toward *that* end, and make some adjustments in your life.

In telling his people to consider their ways, Haggai was merely echoing the words of Moses, who told Israel to "*consider...that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee*" (Deut. 8:5). But we are better off following Samuel's advice to "consider how great things He hath done for you" and then "serve Him in truth" with all of our heart in light of it (1 Sam. 12:24). *That's* what *we* should consider when deciding whether or not to serve the Lord, and a study of Paul's epistles will reveal all the great things God has done for us, and how we should hasten to serve Him in response. 

ENDNOTES

1. According to the date provided by Bishop Ussher.
2. For more on this, see page 13 of the August, 2018 *Berean Searchlight*, and pages 22-24 of the March, 2016 issue.

BBS/BBI Tour of Israel–May 7-16, 2019

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Letter Extra

From Texas:

“Dear Pastor Kurth,

“It’s been awhile since I last wrote, and at that time until now I was having difficulty with wondering what an omnipotent God would want with an average everyday person like myself. What could I possibly contribute? I’ve never accomplished anything other than normal things.

“Your answer didn’t help (not your fault), and my justification for my thoughts continued. I tried to simply let it go. What difference did it make?...

“Then, lo and behold, my monthly *Berean Searchlight* arrived, and inside was an article by Pastor Kevin Sadler entitled ‘Everybody’s a Somebody in the Body of Christ!’ As I’ve stated previously, I am a Christian, and I know there is a living, loving God, who’s Son IS Jesus Christ. I just had trouble wondering ‘what’s He want with me?’

“Say what you want, I’m taking this as no coincidence. I am very thankful I subscribed to your monthly mailing. If after all these years, only one of them has gotten through my thick skull, then you and they have been worth it!

“I am still reading the article and getting something new each time. I feel foolish to have ever doubted Gods’ plans, puny human that I am...

“I have once again decided I’m on board. I hope I never need to doubt my place ever again.”

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BBS Letter Excerpts

From Indiana:

"I have an alarm set on my phone for 8:00 Monday mornings so we can watch Pastor Kevin on *Transformed by Grace*. We really appreciate his messages!"

From Montana:

"I'm praising God for the great blessing of your television outreach. May God bless you and this ministry greatly. This is a big answer to prayer to us Montana stranded Grace believers."

From Michigan:

"Our Men's Council has mulled this over for two months, some having seen your program *Transformed By Grace*, and have finally made a decision to help with \$25 per month, to see people come to Christ and the grace message." (Thank you for helping us get Paul's gospel out to others! -Ed.).

From New York:

"Kindly use some of this donation (as you see fit) toward the Video Fund. My wife and I so enjoy Pastor Kevin's clear explanations with each week's program. We saw the 'Absent from the Body' program last week and look forward to the next installment."

From our Inbox:

"Very good *Two Minutes* explanation [of "How Does Faith Establish the Law?" (Rom. 3:31)]. I will clip this for use in the prisons."

From our Inbox:

"Pastor Kevin Sadler's article about 'Everybody's a Somebody in the Body of Christ' was so timely. My thumb was bandaged for two weeks, and boy did I miss it! The local church functions efficiently with diversity and no jealousy."

From Texas:

"While I realize that electronic delivery of the *Searchlight* would be more cost effective, I love having the hard copy of this publication to carry for air travel or to leave it lying around my home. It has presented an opportunity to share right division on occasion!" (Keep up the good work! -Ed.).

From Wisconsin:

"I recently read *Things That Differ* by C. R. Stam. It was so refreshing to discover a writing that was so on point...I've read a lot of gospel teachings and heard even more. This book was the closest thing I've ever read by anyone to what the Lord has personally revealed to me...as revealed to Paul."

From Ghana:

"Please, I want you to help me on the subject of Tongues. I was once religious until Grace found me. Apostle Paul is my Apostle. I spoke in tongues, but I found out it belongs to the Israelites program. But in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul says... please explain the whole chapter for me."

From our Inbox:

"I would love to find a church near me that preaches the way you do. Most of these denominations are still claiming the promises God gave to Israel. They claim rightly dividing the word of Truth is a man-made theology. Lately I've been having my own church...so pardon all my questions." (Questions are something that need to be encouraged, not pardoned! -Ed.).

From the Philippines:

"Thanks for the reply. I just want to be very sure of the details regarding that. I just feared to mishandle any detail of the biblical accounts. And I want to be very sure of the words that will come out when I deliver God's words."

From California:

"WOW!!! That's the best concrete presentation of biblical facts on the subject of 'gather together' (Eph. 1:10)...I am impressed with every detail of God's Word. Thank you for such a concise explanation. I've got to finish gobbling this up. It tastes so good. I also agree with Stam."

From Missouri:

"I have an older portfolio of audio cassette tapes on the book of Colossians by Paul Sadler. I received this series of messages several years ago, and Paul Sadler is just outstanding in explaining the wonderful book of Colossians."

From Wisconsin:

"Your ministry has been an instrumental part of my life that I now have in the Lord Jesus Christ. I just want to share it with everyone that I come across."

From Kansas:

"Wow! Never heard that viewpoint until today. Well preached Pastor Kurth! I am going to have to allow the Holy Spirit to show me the truth of these two opposing viewpoints. But you made your case very well."

From our Inbox:

"If my dreams don't mean anything to you, then you don't have any answer for me...I know what I saw in there, and it is not my imagination but rather a sign...Accept that men ordained by God...communicate with God through visions and dreams...I cannot buy your ideology."

From South Africa:

"As new Christians discovering the mystery revealed through the Apostle Paul, we have learned many previously unknown scriptural facts from these truly inspirational books on which our minister's and pastor's teachings and Bible studies are based. We use these magazines daily in our study time."

From our Inbox:

"Brother Kurth...that is the best message I believe I have ever read from you!!! Very clear especially the Gospel of our salvation!!! I wish all was that clear from others...When you said faith in his blood...you made it clear what that meant!!!" (Rom. 3:25 makes it clear! -Ed.).

From Colorado:

"A coworker...has been very antagonistic...Having this book [Pastor Stam's commentary on Thessalonians] has increased my ability to answer questions. Just wanted to share how valuable your ministry is in just having these books available."



"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

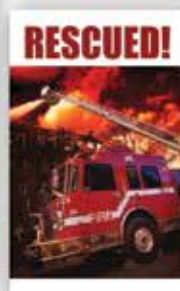
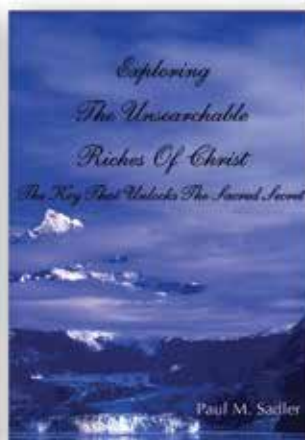
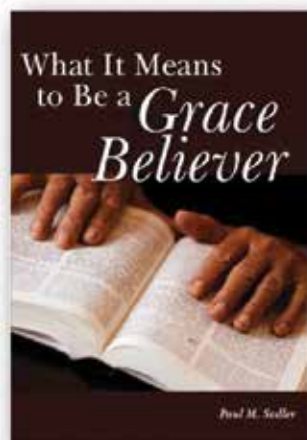
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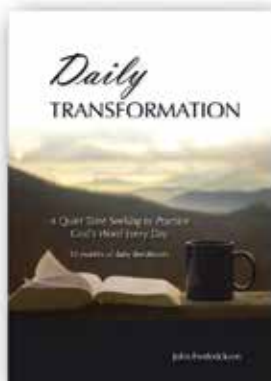
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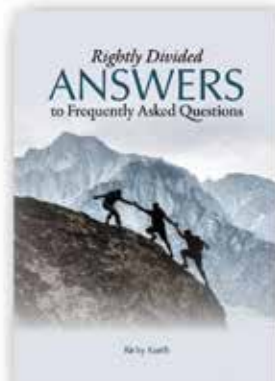
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News and Announcements

Two Minute Woes: Recently we began receiving a large volume of emails from people asking why we had stopped sending them our *Two Minutes With the Bible* daily devotional email. We soon learned that certain servers had suddenly decided that *Two Minutes* was spam and were redirecting our email to our readers' spam files. Then we learned that AOL and Yahoo were blocking us altogether! We appreciate your prayers while we address these issues, and we want you to know that we will never delete your name from our mailing list unless you ask us to do so.

A Fellowlabourer Receives a Transfer: Our dear friend Fred Wisniewski has gone to be with the Lord. Fred served as one of the proofreaders for the *Berean Searchlight* for many years. He loved the Lord, loved the Word of God, and loved the truth of the grace message. Because of that, he loved to serve the Lord. That's why I'm glad to be able to announce that passing away didn't force him into retirement, he is rather now serving the Lord in person. Please keep his wife Velma and their daughter Christine and the rest of the family in prayer as they mourn his loss until the coming of the Lord.

Use Christmas! That was BBS founder Pastor C. R. Stam's attitude. He always said that grace believers should use the world's observance of the Lord's birth to the glory of God by enclosing gospel tracts in greeting cards, and by giving dispensational books and booklets to believers. Why not check out the Bookstore on our website, or contact us today for a full price list? We can even save you the hassle of packaging and shipping! Just let Christine know who you'd like to grace with some of our literature, and when Aaron packages your order, he'll enclose her note explaining that your loved one is receiving your order as a gift from you.

Stocking Stuffers! A new batch of *Transformed by Grace* DVDs is now available for purchase. If you found one or more of Episodes 37-48 to be a blessing, why not bless someone else! You can buy DVDs of individual messages for \$2.50, or purchase the set of 12 for \$24.00 plus shipping and handling.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

Grace Family Bible Church Conference, November 3-4, Duncansville, PA

BBF Winter Conference, January 26-27, Inverness, FL

Best of Israel Trip, May 7-16, 2019

BBS Regional Conference, September 20-22, 2019, Kalispell, MT



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(This is only a partial price list. For a full price list please see our website or contact BBS.)

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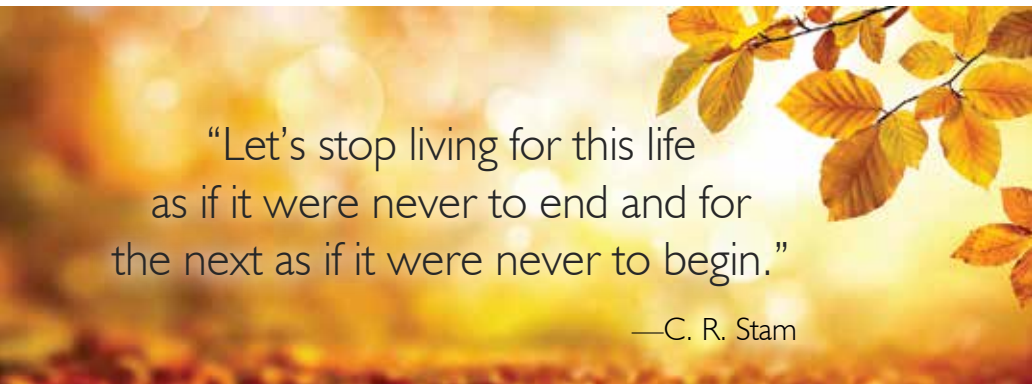
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as if it were never to end and for
the next as if it were never to begin.”

—C. R. Stam