

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT™

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

February 2019



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This month’s front cover is the Cape Egmont Lighthouse in New Zealand.

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.

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The Berean Searchlight (ISSN 0005-8890), February 2019. Vol. 79, Number 11.

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.



From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

A year after I was blessed to be led to the Lord by a grace pastor, I decided I wanted to be one. I'd heard my pastor describe the revival under Ezra as a time when Israel's teachers "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, *and gave the sense*, and caused them to *understand* the reading" (Neh. 8:8). He explained how that resulted in "great mirth" among God's people, "*because they had understood the words that were declared unto them*" (Neh. 8:12). That's when I decided to make it my goal in life to know the truth and to make it known, to help people with their joy (2 Cor. 1:24).

I began to study for the ministry under my pastor, and started teaching a Bible study to the unsaved classmates at my high school to share the gospel with them. I also began attending our school's *Youth For Christ* meetings specifically to meet Christian young people who I could invite to our church. A good number of them took me up on it and learned the grace message. But our church had no youth group, so another grace teen and I formed one and became its teachers.

I gave my first message in a grace church about that time, and when my pastor took another church, I became one of the regular guest speakers at our church. I soon learned of two other pastorless grace churches within 100 miles, and I became one of their regular guest speakers as well. My training stepped up dramatically when Pastor Stam hired me to typeset the *Searchlight*, and I had the opportunity to be mentored by one of the pioneers of the grace message. So when the saints of *Faith Bible Church* in Steger, Illinois, called me to be their pastor in February of 1979, I was only 23, but I had plenty of experience tucked under my belt.

I mention all this because this month marks my 40th year in the ministry. I still pastor that same Chicago-area church in addition to my duties here at BBS. I also still wonder why every man who knows the grace message doesn't want to become a grace pastor.

If you are a young man whose heart *burns* to know the truth and to make it known, I'd encourage you to do as I did and capitalize on every available opportunity to teach, no matter how humble. That high school Bible class met in a locker room, and two of those pastorless churches in which I ministered met in converted garages. Make yourself available to teach in any and every capacity, and maybe 40 years from now, you too will be looking back at the most fulfilling and rewarding life that you could possibly have lived.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Ricky Kurth



WHY *the* CONCERN?

PASTOR RICKY KURTH

Editor

An article drawn from the first message I preached after becoming a pastor on February 11, 1979, forty years ago this month. BBS founder Pastor C. R. Stam graciously printed this article in the April 1979 issue of the *Searchlight*, and we share it with you to commemorate my 40th year in the ministry.

“Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone.

“And sent Timotheus...to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.

“...when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain” (1 Thes. 3:1,2,5).

According to the Acts record, the Apostle Paul had only recently spent three weeks in Thessalonica, establishing the church there. Why then was he so eager to check back with them? Twice we read that he *“could no longer forbear,”* and so sent Timothy to encourage and establish them, and to let him know how they were doing. Yet, as far as the record is concerned, no messenger had come to him with alarming news about the Thessalonian church. What had happened to make him so concerned about the state of their faith?

The answer is found in Acts 17:5-10. Paul had just been run out of town—their town! And he was concerned lest this humiliating treatment at the hands of the Thessalonian Jews might have shaken their faith. It is, after all, no small thing when your spiritual leader is thrown out of town!

Not that this had bothered Paul personally. He was accustomed to such violence and was not disturbed by it, as evidenced by the fact that he immediately focused his total attention on the ministry of the gospel at Berea (v. 10-12). Indeed, we have his own testimony in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 about the similar event which had brought him to Thessalonica:

“...even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.”

Yes, Paul fully realized “how great things he must suffer” for the Savior he represented (Acts 9:16), but his beloved Thessalonians could not fully realize this. His ignominious expulsion from their city had doubtless left them shaken, especially with “all the city on an uproar,” and the house of Jason assaulted merely on suspicion of harboring the fugitive apostle and his companions (Acts 17:5-9).

But there was yet another reason for his concern. These same Jews of Thessalonica, when they knew that “the Word of God was preached of Paul at Berea...came thither also, and stirred up the people” (v. 13). Paul was now safely out of their reach in Athens, but he knew they had returned to their own city, and would now doubtless redouble their persecution of the young Thessalonian church.

Little wonder the apostle lost no time in dispatching Timothy, his trusted co-worker, to their side, to assure them that

“...no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know” (1 Thes. 3:3,4).


How well, indeed, they had come to know this! And how they must have welcomed Timothy to their assembly, and rejoiced over the subsequent epistle from their father in the faith, who evidently cared for them so much!

Finally, Paul wanted them to understand that their afflictions came as a result of living in the dispensation of grace, and *not* as a result of persecution in *the Tribulation*, which some were affirming. It is true, says the apostle, that we are appointed to afflictions, but

“...God hath *not* appointed us to *wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9).

It is evident from the context that the “wrath” they were *not* appointed to is the wrath of the Tribulation. Consider: God has not appointed us to wrath, but God *has* appointed us to “obtain salvation” by our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the Thessalonians were already saved, this can only refer to the *completion*, the *fulfillment* of their salvation, i.e., at the rapture of the church. Paul confirms this view by a similar statement in Romans 13:11:

“...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Furthermore, verse 8 of 1 Thessalonians 5 describes the finishing touch to our armour as “the *hope of salvation*.” What else could this phrase refer to but “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13), the completion of our salvation? When we trusted Christ, we were immediately saved from the *penalty* of sin, and we are today being saved from the *power* of sin. But some day, at the rapture, we shall be saved from the very *presence* of sin—and it may be soon! 

Our Primary Source of STRENGTH



PASTOR JOHN FREDERICKSEN

BBS Board Member

Where do you run to for strength in times of difficulty? Some merely wallow in depression. Others resort to efforts in the flesh. Many simply turn to other people. The tragedy of turning to any of these things or people is that their help or comfort is only marginal at best, and ignores what God has supplied to provide our needed stability.

David found the right answer. He wrote, “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me” (Psa. 119:50). In the midst of weakness, even when he felt extremely despondent, time spent in God’s Word brought him spiritual life, comfort, and the strength that he needed. The extent of the help he received is indicated by his testimony in verse 71: “It was good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” Quite simply, he allowed God to meet his need so adequately that his tragedy became a triumph by turning to the Scriptures.

Not only are we to personally find God’s Word to be the answer for all our needs, we are also to present the Scriptures to others as the answer to their needs as well. That’s what the Apostle Paul meant when he instructed the Philippians to be always “holding forth [meaning to present or offer] the Word of life” (Phil. 2:16). Their ministry to the lost was to be enhanced by the most “blameless” (2:15) conduct possible, as they shared the gospel with others, and applied God’s Word to daily living. But their ministry was to be empowered by promoting the Scriptures (not arguments, logic, or platitudes) to the hearts of those with whom they sought to have a ministry. This was the pattern the Apostle Paul left them. He held forth the Word of Life to them; they believed it and were saved. Later his letter further equipped them for their present needs in the midst of suffering. It was this practice of presenting God’s Word to others, regardless of the individual need, that made Paul’s ministry so effective. God’s Word has real power because it is a divine message from the Lord God Almighty Himself.

God’s Word is the answer for the need of every human soul. Whether the need is eternal life, answers to current problems, counsel about what to do, comfort in trial, or insight into future events, God’s Word is intended by the Lord to be our source of strength and power. Run to it, and encourage others to do so, rather than turning to any other source.



JUSTIFICATION

A message given at the 50th annual BBF
summer conference in Tipp City, Ohio

PASTOR KEVIN **SADLER**
President

“A guy bought a new refrigerator and didn’t know what to do with his old one so he put it in his front yard with a sign that said, ‘Free to good home. You want it—you take it.’ For three days the fridge sat there without even one person looking at it. He eventually decided that people were too untrusting of this deal because they thought it was too good to be true. So he took the old sign off and made a new one: ‘Fridge for sale—\$50.’ The next day someone stole it. Most of us are skeptical when something seems too good to be true, especially when it has great value and we’re told that it’s free.”¹

Because this is true, many struggle with the gospel of grace and eternal life. It seems too good to be true that it’s free. This is the most valuable thing in the world, and people become skeptical when they hear that it’s free. Nonetheless, it’s the truth of God’s Word. We are justified, are

declared righteous by God, and have the sure hope of heaven, all as a free gift. It is received by faith alone in Christ and what He accomplished for us by His finished work.

BUT NOW

Job asked the question, “...how should man be just [or righteous] with God?” (Job 9:2). Then Job goes on to praise God, saying,

“If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength...Which removeth the mountains...Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble...Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number... Behold, He taketh away, who can hinder Him? who will say

unto Him, What doest Thou?... How much less shall I answer Him, and choose out my words to reason with Him?...If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong; and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:6,8-10,12,14,19,20).

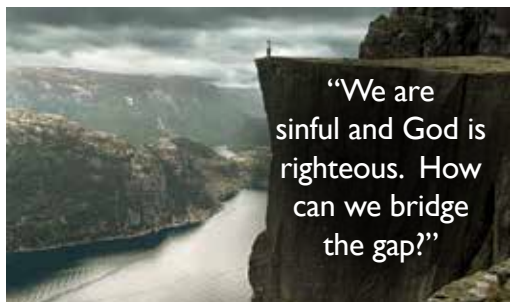
Job lists a few things that are true about the power and majesty of God. In his discourse, he wonders how he, a frail, sinful, unimportant individual, could establish righteousness before such a great, glorious, and holy God. How can a man be right with God, and particularly a God like this, Who is so vastly beyond him? How can anyone therefore escape His judgment? Job knew he could never successfully make his case to be right with Him. He knew that, if he opened his mouth to try, he would only condemn himself.

Job asked the most important question that any person could ever ask: “How can I be right with God?” The Book of Romans gives the answer. It gives us the truth for how we can be and how we can *know* we are right with God.

One of the major themes of Romans is righteousness. In the first three chapters of the book, Paul shows that the only righteousness that mankind possesses or ever attains is *unrighteousness*. Paul has given us the bad news and has proven that all have sinned; all are unrighteous; all the world is guilty before God. Romans 3:10-12 sums it up:

“There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that

seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”



A great chasm lies between Romans 3:20—

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

and 3:21—

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”

It’s an infinitely-wide gap separating our condition from God’s character. We are sinful and God is righteous. How can we bridge the gap? How can we go from one side to the other? The answer is—we cannot. But this is where the good news begins. After 64 verses of sin and guilt (1:18-3:20), we find the best news possible.

Years ago, the TV commercial’s answer to the question, “How do you spell relief?” was “R-O-L-A-I-D-S.” But in the Book of Romans, it is B-U-T N-O-W! The words “But now” describe a dispensational change. These two words signify that God has inaugurated a new program. “But now” means something is different. When Paul says, “But now the righteousness

of God without the law is manifested," he is talking about something new and glorious—the fact that now, under grace, righteousness apart from the law is made known and declared openly.

"But now" means that a program and a message have been revealed, under which God now righteously saves unrighteous sinners apart from and without any relationship to the law, by faith alone in Christ. Righteousness was never BY the law, but neither was it apart from the law. In the past, the prescribed method of approaching God was through faith, demonstrated by obedience to the law which God had given. "But now" we are not under law; we are under grace.

The Greek word *phaneroo*, translated as "is manifested," was often used figuratively in Greek literature to mean "shine, light up, appear," much like someone would describe the rising of the sun. Against the darkness and blackness of the human condition of sin and unrighteousness under the law in the past (Rom. 1:18-3:20), the "But now" signifies the dawning of grace. It was through the revelation of the mystery, the gospel of the grace of God committed to the Apostle Paul, that God "manifested" and brought to light this truth of righteousness by faith in Christ alone, apart from the law, based solely in the death and resurrection of Christ.

FROM FAITH TO FAITH

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (Rom. 3:22).

Paul explains that the righteousness he wrote of is "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." The righteousness God gives to believers today is by the faith OF Jesus Christ. Faith meets faith with the giving and receiving of God's righteousness. As Paul puts it in Romans 1:17, "For therein [in the gospel of Christ] is the righteousness of God revealed *from faith to faith*." Christ's faith, His faithfulness in obedience to His Father, is the basis of our justification. He has provided redemption and salvation from our sins through His Cross. The righteousness of God is available to all through Christ's finished work. When we place our faith in what Christ has done, by His faithfulness to His Word, we have that righteousness. Christ imputes His righteousness to our account.

God's righteousness is from the faith of Jesus Christ unto all who believe. By Christ's faithfulness, He gives "the gift of righteousness" (5:17), and by faith we receive it (3:22). Philippians 3:9 demonstrates this "faith to faith" truth as well: "And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through THE FAITH OF CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God BY FAITH."

We receive the righteousness of God by faith. The teaching of Romans is that justification is by *faith alone*.

Romans 3:22: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that *believe*...."

Romans 3:25: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through *faith* in His blood....”

Romans 3:26: “...that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which *believeth* in Jesus.”

Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by *faith*....”

Romans 4:5: “But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness.”

Romans 4:24: “But for us also, to whom it [righteousness] shall be imputed, if we *believe* on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by *faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Faith is only as good as its object. All people trust something. Multitudes trust in false gods and religion. Many trust themselves to be saved. But to have the righteousness of God, we must trust God and His Word, which teaches us to trust Christ, that He died for our sins and rose again. We trust 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Faith alone is both the hardest and easiest thing for a person to do. It is hard because it is born in desperation and humility. It is difficult because it means acknowledging in your heart that you are so guilty before God that there is nothing you can do to solve the problem or make yourself acceptable to Him. At the same time, faith alone is so simple

and profound—trusting that God in His grace and love has done everything necessary to save you from hell through Christ’s payment for your sins.

God’s righteousness is available to all who believe, and then Paul adds, “for there is no difference.” There is no difference between all people. We’re all in the same boat. All are unrighteous, guilty sinners and in danger of God’s wrath and judgment. All need Christ’s righteousness. All need to trust Christ to receive His righteousness. When it comes to needing salvation, there is no difference between people. There is no difference in who is lost, and there is no difference in who can be saved. God’s righteousness is available to sinners. That’s good news! All of us are sinners, and righteousness is available to each and every person in the world.

ALL HAVE SINNED

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Romans 3:23 teaches that everyone, without exception, has sinned. The word “sin” means to miss the mark. It paints a picture of an archer whose arrows *always* come up short of even hitting the target, much less the bull’s-eye. We all miss the target of righteousness. We are all sinners by nature, and we all sin in word, thought, and deed.

Also, we all continually “come short of the glory of God.” The Greek word for “come short” was used of a runner in a foot-race who fell so far behind as to never reach the finish line. We all come short of God’s glory. God’s glory has to

do with His goodness, righteousness, holiness, power, authority, standard of perfection, and really, the sum total of all He is. God's glory is a line that we will always fall short of and never reach by our own efforts.

The current world record for the high jump is about one-half inch over 8 feet. No one else in the world can jump that high. As impressive as an 8-foot-high jump is, God's standard is infinitely higher. Although this illustration too falls short of showing how far we come short of God's glory, imagine watching an Olympic high-jump event from an airplane



at a cruising altitude of 30,000 feet. That is a pale visual of God's perspective on how short we fall of His glory. Nobody comes close. No one can get there by his or her own effort. We *all* fall *far* short of the glory of God.

DECLARED RIGHTEOUS

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

Paul's teaching is that “them that believe” (v. 22) are “justified freely by [God's] grace.” *Justification* is a legal term that means to declare righteous. Based on our faith in the Cross and Christ's

full payment for sin, God declares the unjust to be just and the unrighteous to be righteous.

Though we stand guilty before God, completely devoid of righteousness, we are declared righteous by means of a transfer of righteousness to our account from the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ took our sins upon Himself and paid for them at the Cross. When we believe, God imputes Christ's righteousness to our account. We're declared righteous on this basis.

It's important to note what justification is not. *Justification is not a pardon.* It's more than a pardon. A pardon just covers sins of the past. No judge has ever issued a pardon for future crimes. Justification deals with the sins of the past, present, and the future. They are all paid for. As the old hymn of the faith rings out, “Jesus paid it all!” Our sin-debt is gone and we are righteous in Christ.

Justification is not a return to innocence. It's a state of righteousness, not innocence. It's greater than innocence. We're clothed in the very righteousness of Christ. We don't just go back to being like Adam; we are “in Christ”! In the sight of God, we are as righteous as His Son, because we are righteous with His righteousness!

Justification is not a process. It takes place as a transaction. We're not gradually being justified in the hope that someday we will be fully justified. Our justification takes place at a moment in time when we believe, and it stands eternally. Justification is both instantaneous and irreversible. When we trust what Christ has done for us at the Cross and

that He rose again, although we don't see it or hear it, immediately, in the court of heaven, by judicial decree, God declares us "RIGHTEOUS!" Now for all eternity when God looks at you, He sees you as righteous because you are in Christ (Rom. 8:33).

We are justified, declared righteous by God, "freely." The same Greek word translated as "freely" in Romans 3:24 is used in John 15:25 where the Lord quotes Psalms, saying, "They hated Me *without a cause*." There was nothing in Christ that deserved hatred, and there is nothing in us that deserves to be declared righteous by God. What we do deserve is judgment and condemnation because of our sins. Instead, when we trust Christ as our Savior, we are justified freely, or without a cause.

An ad for the U.S. Marines Corps pictures a sword, and beneath it the words, "Earned, never given." If you want to become a Marine, you must be prepared to earn that title through sacrifice, hardship, and training. If you get it, you deserve it. However, to be declared righteous by God, you must have the *exact opposite* attitude. The message of the gospel is "Given, never earned." No one can save their own soul. No one can earn the right to enter heaven. To be right with God depends not on you, but on God. It is not about what you earn, but what God freely gives. This is the majesty of the gospel. Without human merit, and not as a reward, but as a gift are we saved and justified—"freely by His grace."

Grace is undeserved favor and unmerited kindness to those who

deserve and merit the opposite. Grace is all one-sided. It's God's kindness to the guilty, to sinners, to those who continually fall short of His glory. When we trust God's provision for justification through His Son, by grace He brings us across that infinitely-wide chasm that separates us from Him.

REDEEMED—HOW I LOVE TO PROCLAIM IT!

Salvation doesn't cost us anything at all, but it came at tremendous cost to God. It is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). The only way our justification and the righteousness of God could come to us freely was through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and the price Christ paid for our sins. "Redemption" means release or setting free by the payment of a price.

"When A. J. Gordon was pastor of a church in Boston, he met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. Gordon inquired, 'Son, where did you get those birds?' The boy replied, 'I trapped them out in the field.' 'What are you going to do with them?' 'I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home.'

"Gordon offered to buy them, and the lad exclaimed, 'Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well.' Gordon replied, 'I'll give you \$2 for the cage and the birds.' 'Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain.'

"The exchange was made and the boy went away whistling,

happy with his shiny coins. Gordon walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire coop, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue.

“The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate his sermon about Christ’s coming to seek and to save the lost—paying for them with His own precious blood. ‘That boy told me the birds were not songsters,’ said Gordon, ‘but when I released them and they winged their way heavenward, it seemed to me they were singing, Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!’”²



That’s what Christ did for us. We were caged up in our sin and headed for eternal death in the Lake of Fire. But when we believe, Christ purchases us by His shed blood and sets us free, and we are “Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; / Redeemed, redeemed, / His child, and forever, I am.”³

Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from *all* iniquity” (Titus 2:14). Christ paid for *all* our sins. When we believe, we are set free from *all* of them. The reason God can declare ungodly sinners who trust Christ to be righteous is that the Lord

Jesus Christ has fully paid the penalty for *all* our sins, and we have Christ’s imputed righteousness. Thus, when anyone trusts Christ, he/she is immediately justified, declared righteous, freely and eternally by God’s grace “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

THE JUST JUSTIFIER

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26).

A propitiation is a means by which justice is satisfied, God’s wrath is averted, and mercy can be shown on the basis of an acceptable sacrifice. The Word teaches us that God was satisfied, and satisfied eternally, with Christ’s perfect sacrifice and full payment for sin at the Cross (Isa. 53:11).

Propitiation is why God is able to declare believers righteous. It is that God’s justice against our sins was satisfied. His wrath against our sins was taken away forever. And mercy can be shown on the basis of Christ’s perfect, acceptable sacrifice for sin.

Two times in Romans 3:25-26, Paul writes, “To declare His righteousness.” The Greek word translated “declare” means an evident token, a proof, or a pointing out, as with a finger. It’s as if God, by His Word, is pointing His finger at the Cross and saying, “If you want proof of My justice, there’s

My justice! If you want proof of My righteousness, there's My righteousness! If you want proof of My grace, there's My grace!"

One of these declarations of God's righteousness is for the past (v. 25), while in the other He demonstrates in the present dispensation of grace (v. 26). In the past, from Adam to Christ, God saved those who put their faith in Him on the basis of whatever revelation He gave them for their salvation. At that time, God did not revoke the punishment for sin; instead, He suspended the punishment by His forbearance. Prior to the Cross, believers were forgiven, given everlasting life, and permitted entrance into paradise "on credit." Their sins had not yet been paid for historically, but they received the merits of the Cross and were saved on the basis of a price yet to be paid.


When Christ died, He reached all the way back to Adam and paid for those sins. It was on the basis of Christ's shed blood that believers' sins were forgiven in the past. God could never be accused of being unjust or unrighteous because of His forgiveness and *seeming* to pass over of sins in the past. Christ came and He paid for those past sins. The Cross declares, is proof of, God's righteousness for the forgiveness of sins that are past.

Also, "at this time," God's righteousness is declared by the justification of any who believe during the present dispensation of grace. God is "just" in declaring believing sinners righteous by the Cross of Christ. Justice is not an external system to which God tries to adhere. His justice comes out of His

very nature and Who He is. God is the very definition of what justice truly is and means (Deut. 32:4).

God's justice and righteousness is declared through the Cross. According to God's justice, what we deserve because of our sins is *death* and *wrath*. God is "just" because sin did not go unpunished. Christ our Substitute took our place and *died* for our sins. And God's righteous *wrath* was fully poured out on Christ as He paid for our sins at the Cross. God's justice against our sins was carried out perfectly.

Thus, God is "just" and "the Justifier," because the death of His Son and the full payment of our sin-debt clears the way for Him, in His justice, to justify and declare believing sinners righteous according to His righteousness. Albert Midlane penned this reality in a hymn: "God could not pass the sinner by; / Justice demands that he should die; / But in the cross of Christ we see / How God can save, yet righteous be."

When filling up at a gas station nowadays, you often get a "Word of the Day" on the screen at the pump. A word that should bring joy to our hearts is *justification*. May the truth of being justified freely by God's grace drive us to live with gratitude for the One "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), and share the good news with others! 

1. Brian Bill, "Romans 3:21-25 How to be Right With God—7/16/06," https://www.preceptaustin.org/index.php/sermons_by_brian_bill-1.

2. Told by Paul Lee Tan, "Sing Redeemed," Bible.org, published Feb. 2, 2009, <https://bible.org/illustration/sing-redeemed>.

3. "Redeemed," <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/301>.

Overcoming Sin With the *New Heart*



(Part 2 of Pastor Lawson's article in
last months issue, *Our Union with
Christ and the New Heart.*)

PASTOR KEN **LAWSON**
BBS Board Member

THE GRACE WAY

To overcome sin, we must not rely on rules and regulations, the law, will power, or anything in ourselves. The grace way is the only thing effective, because it is God's way, and the method by which He works in His own children today. *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace"* (Rom. 6:14). What Paul teaches here in Romans 6 about being dead to sin but alive to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the most valuable lesson he learned from God for complete victory over sin.

You might think of it this way. If I were to die today, there would be one positive; I would not be able to sin against God anymore. The negative is that I would not be able to serve Him anymore in this life. Similarly, when we receive Christ as Savior, God puts our old self to death (affected by Christ's death) and we become disconnected with our old nature. Thankfully, He doesn't leave us in death, but now imparts new life (Christ's resurrection life) to us by which we have strength to serve Him.

Romans 6:5-10 is a further explanation of verses 3 and 4. It does not deal with the future death and resurrection of the body, but our current spiritual death and resurrection with Christ.

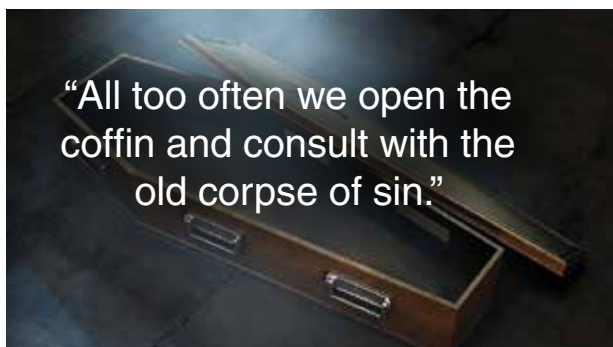
"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:5-10).

To be "dead to sin" does *not* mean that sin cannot affect us, nor does the fact that "our old man is crucified" with Christ indicate that

he no longer bothers us. Dead men affect us everyday. Our parents and grandparents affect who we are, how we think, and how we react. Even dead presidents affect us in ways we don't even realize. But we need not be enslaved by a dead man. And we need not be controlled by the old man within that God has put to death.

It may be helpful to think of death as separation. Physical death, for example, is a separation of the spirit from the body. Likewise, the Romans 6 form of death is a separation of our sin nature from us. When we believed the gospel, God affected this separation by a spiritual circumcision in which He

cut off (or surgically removed) the old heart (self), and replaced it with a new heart (Christ) as the life-giving Source. Lack of knowledge, unbelief, and selfishness wait in the shadows to derail our spirituality. The old heart can be reconnected and take control of our lives if we allow our spiritual life to flounder.



A PROPHETIC VOICE AND A CONTEMPORARY ONE

The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel spoke of a time in the coming Kingdom when his restored people, Israel, will receive their heart transplant. *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them"* (Ezek. 36:26-27). Their hard heart will be replaced with a soft heart which will be ready to do His will. While Israel's stony heart will be removed, God, in His wisdom, allows ours to remain within, and while separated, we still have the freedom to yield to its destructive ways. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Gal 5:17).

Years ago, I heard a message on Romans 6 from Pastor Win Johnson of Denver, Colorado. He spoke at the annual Bible conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship. When the venerable old saint ascended the platform, the first thing he said was, "I wonder if I could amend the title of the message tonight. The title as it appears on the program reads, 'A Change of Masters.' I would like to change it to be 'A Choice of Masters.'" He was right and I never forgot it. While we do have a change of masters in standing and position before God, it is nevertheless true that in our state and condition in the world we have a responsibility

to reckon it to be true of us personally, and to yield ourselves to God as alive from the dead. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

What Paul says in Romans 6:6 about the body of sin being destroyed doesn't mean that our bodies cannot become the instruments of sin. That notion is dashed by what Paul says in verses 12 and 13, as well as our own experience. All too often we open the coffin and consult with the old corpse of sin. The word "destroyed" does not mean annihilated, but "rendered inoperative" or ineffective. It is potential.

Think of this illustration. Mark and Carol have been married for 15 years. Mark thought that it would be a wonderful wedding anniversary gift to surprise her with a new car. When the day came, Carol looked out the front picture window to see a bright, colorful new car with all the accessories. She was delighted! But then Mark thought of a devious joke to play on her. During the night, he got out of bed, went to the garage, and disconnected the battery to the new car. The next morning, Carol got in the car to head off to work. Mark stood in the kitchen listening and laughing as she tried desperately to start the car. Carol finally walked in the house in tears and said, "Mark, I think we got a lemon!" Mark explained the prank, and in a few months she thought it was funny too. The new car was in perfect running order. Mark had just separated it from its power source.

So Christ has separated us positionally from the sinful nature (or old heart), and connected us to Christ with His resurrection life. What God has joined let us not put asunder, and let us not join together what God has separated!

THREE HINGES FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

Three key words will serve as hinges to help us open the door to Paul's teaching in the beginning of this chapter. They are **know** - Romans 6:3,6,9; **reckon** - Romans 6:11; **yield** - Romans 6:13. So far, the key word has been "know." But knowledge of the way of holiness is not enough to actually reach it. The following verses supply the remaining elements.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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. 6:11-13).

The next key word is "reckon." We understand that Christ died to put to death our sin nature and rose again. Now he says, consider it to be true of you personally. Since we are one with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, reckon that He put the old heart to death, and gave you a new resurrection heart that doesn't respond to sin. This is where we get to exercise our faith in what God has said.

Notice how many times the phrases “unto sin” and “unto God” are used. Verse 11 describes the position of every believer as dead to sin but alive to God. Verses 12 and 13 show potential movement toward either sin or God, depending on our choice. The command to “Let not sin reign in your mortal body” shows that it is possible to do so if we fail to reckon.


Lets face it, sin is pleasurable to the flesh, and is still a draw (1 Tim. 5:6; Heb. 11:25). But God wants to draw us to His right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore. Nothing is more pleasurable and fulfilling than living close to God, and honoring the Lordship of Christ in our lives. He fills the heart with a peace, love, and joy that eclipses any pleasure that we could experience in sin. And it lasts forever.



The final word is “yield,” and it is an act of the will. It is the same word that Paul uses later in Romans 12:1 and is translated “present.” *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* God wants his children to choose God and His righteousness as a continuing lifestyle, and yield their eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, and entire being to Him as an act of acceptable worship for His name’s sake.

We do it not out of fear or guilt, but because the love of Christ constrains us to live for Him who died for us, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Paul says much more in the remainder of Romans to complement this short introduction to practical holiness, but suffice it now to repeat Paul’s instruction, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

When temptation comes, we can speak to ourselves and say, “I am dead to this through Christ’s death, and alive to God through His resurrection. He has set me free from the taskmaster of sin, and I choose to conduct myself in newness of life because of who He has made me to be in Christ.” A wise man once said, “When temptation knocks, send Christ to answer it.”

In order to have the victory over sin, we must know (the fact of our co-crucifixion and resurrection with Christ), reckon (consider it to be true of us personally), and yield (an act of the will by which we choose to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in our lives). God’s divine heart surgery has given us the power to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). As sons of God, we now have a choice of masters which by knowledge, faith, and commitment will lead to a change of masters in our conduct, faithfulness, and attitude. 



In my past ministry as a pastor of a local assembly, we had a “grace study” once a month in various homes of our people. We focused on the message of grace for today and rightly dividing the Word of truth. One month, I created an activity sheet to show the difference between the ministries of Peter and Paul and the importance of following our apostle for this dispensation of grace, the Apostle Paul. I pray this study would be a help to you “unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God” (Col. 2:2). —Pastor Kevin Sadler

Fill in the correct answer: Peter or Paul

- 1a _____ My hope was a kingdom of heaven on the earth (Matt. 19:28).
1b _____ My hope was heaven in heaven above (Phil. 3:20).
- 2a _____ I looked for Christ's Rapture of the Church to take the Church to heaven (1 Thes. 4:15-17).
2b _____ I looked for Christ's Second Coming to the earth to establish His kingdom (Matt. 24:3,29-31).
- 3a _____ I preached the last days of Israel according to prophecy (Acts 2:14-21).
3b _____ I preached the last days of the Body of Christ according to the mystery (2 Tim. 3:1-9).
- 4a _____ I proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 10:5-8; Gal. 2:7).
4b _____ I proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).
- 5a _____ I preached faith alone in Christ's death and resurrection for salvation (Rom. 4:5).
5b _____ I preached repentance and water baptism for salvation (Acts 2:38).
- 6a _____ I preached Christ according to prophecy, which had been made known since the world began (Acts 3:12-26).
6b _____ I preached Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25).
- 7a _____ I walked on water (Matt. 14:29).
7b _____ I was bitten by a deadly viper and felt no harm (Acts 28:3-5).

- 8a _____ I threw myself out of a boat when I saw the resurrected Lord Jesus (John 21:7).
- 8b _____ I fell to the ground when I saw the resurrected and ascended Lord on the Damascus Road (Acts 22:6-7).
- 9a _____ I compelled believers to blaspheme the Lord (Acts 26:11).
- 9b _____ I denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75).
- 10a _____ I was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3).
- 10b _____ I was a fisherman (Matt. 4:18).
- 11a _____ My name means "little."
- 11b _____ My name means "little rock."
- 12a _____ I did not have a higher education (Acts 4:13).
- 12b _____ I did have a higher education, trained by Gamaliel the Pharisee (Acts 22:3).
- 13a _____ My father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6).
- 13b _____ The Lord healed my mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31).
- 14a _____ I was an apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:8).
- 14b _____ I was the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13).
- 15a _____ I have authority as the only, primary apostle to the Body of Christ (Col. 1:1,24-27).
- 15b _____ I have authority as the primary apostle among the twelve to the Kingdom Church (Matt. 16:19).
- 16a _____ I had other names: Simon, Cephas (John 1:40-42).
- 16b _____ I had another name: Saul (Acts 13:9).
- 17a _____ I raised Eutychus from the dead by the power of the Lord (Acts 20:7-12).
- 17b _____ I raised Dorcas from the dead by the power of the Lord (Acts 9:36-43).
- 18a _____ I healed by my shadow (Acts 5:15-16).
- 18b _____ I healed by my handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12).
- 19a _____ I was a Jew from Bethsaida in Galilee (John 1:43-44).
- 19b _____ I was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 22:3).
- 20a _____ I was in prison but an angel miraculously led me out and delivered me (Acts 12:6-11).
- 20b _____ I was in prison but a great earthquake delivered me (Acts 16:25-31).

ANSWERS:

Paul

1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7b, 8b, 9a, 10a, 11a, 12b, 13a, 14b, 15a, 16b, 17a, 18b, 19b, 20b.

Peter

1a, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5b, 6a, 7a, 8a, 9b, 10b, 11b, 12a, 13b, 14a, 15b, 16a, 17b, 18a, 19a, 20a.



The Most Important Qualification of All

A Study in the Book of Titus

PASTOR RICKY KURTH

Editor

Every church is looking for the most qualified pastor they can find. Someone has quipped that the *perfect* pastor is 29 years old and has 40 years of experience. He's paid \$300 a week and gives \$200 back to the church. He has a burning desire to work with youth and spends all of his time with the senior citizens. He makes 15 home visits a day and is always in his office when people need him. And as you can imagine, the perfect pastor is pretty hard to come by!

In describing the qualifications of a pastor (Titus 1:6-8), the Apostle Paul lists some important ones, but he saved the *most* important one for last, insisting that a pastor should always be

“Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9).

Pastors should always hold fast “the faithful Word,” *the Word of God!* The apostle calls it the *faithful* Word because God is faithful to every promise in His Book.

But here's the thing about that: He didn't make all those promises

to you! You can pray “give us this day our daily bread” all you want (Matt. 6:11), but God will not be faithful to His promise to rain manna down on you as He did for the people of Israel in the wilderness, and as He will do for them again in the Tribulation (Micah 7:14,15 cf. Rev. 12:14). God also promised the people of Israel that in the kingdom of heaven on earth, “all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). But He will not faithfully deliver on *that* promise in the dispensation of grace either.

And there are still *other* promises in the Bible that God is not honoring today. If the people of Israel were obedient to God's Word in time past, He promised to save them out of all their tribulations (Deut. 4:30), and He faithfully delivered on that promise (1 Sam. 10:19). But God has not made that promise to you! Today, in the dispensation of grace, God allows us to go *through* tribulation, and then is faithful to the promise He gives us *through the Apostle Paul* that “tribulation worketh patience”

(Rom. 5:3). You see, Paul is the apostle of the present dispensation (Eph. 3:1-3), so you know God will be faithful to the promises He makes us *through him*.

The Original Promise Keeper

And Paul gives us *other* promises to which God will be faithful. When he says, “if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, *ye shall live*” (Rom. 8:13), he means that in executing the sinful works of your flesh you can live, *really* live—*live it up*, spiritually speaking! If you want to live life *on the highest plane imaginable*, mortify the sinful deeds of your body and see if God isn’t faithful to *that* promise.



God will also be faithful to His promise to us through Paul that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*” (Col. 3:4). That’s a promise of eternal security that will come to fruition at the Rapture, the “salvation” (Rom. 13:11) that God promises through Paul to give us *before* the “wrath” of the Tribulation is poured out (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9). If you don’t believe God will be faithful to *that* promise, you should be storing up food and other supplies in an effort to try to survive the Tribulation.

When the day of the Rapture comes, God will *also* be faithful to the promise He gave us through Paul to “reward” us for our labor for Him (1 Cor. 3:14). In that day, you will see that He will be just as faithful to the promise Paul gave us that “the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

And so while the “faithful Word” that pastors are to “hold fast” is the entire Word of God, it is only the Word of God *rightly divided*. Our promises are found in Paul’s epistles, so we should focus on them. But since Paul says that “all Scripture is...profitable” for us (2 Tim. 3:16), we know that there is *also* a great deal of value in studying the promises He made to Israel, for as we see God being faithful to those promises, it gives us hope that He will be faithful to the promises He made to us. That’s why Paul wrote,

“...whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, *that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Rom. 15:4).

So it is *this* faithful Word—God’s *rightly divided* Word—that a pastor *must* hold fast, “that he may be able *by sound doctrine* both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” You see, unless you rightly divide the Word of God, you can’t know what sound doctrine *is* in the dispensation of grace! When God gave those promises to the people of Israel, it was sound doctrine to *teach* those promises. But to offer those promises to God’s people today would constitute *unsound* doctrine!

We know that sound doctrine today is found in Paul's epistles, because after he warned Timothy about some things (1 Tim. 1:9), the apostle went on to warn him about "any other thing that is *contrary* to sound doctrine" (v. 10),

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, *which was committed to my trust*" (v. 11).

As you can see, Paul defined "sound doctrine" as that which is "according to," or *in accord with*, the gospel committed to him. That's why when Paul told *Timothy* what to "hold fast," he told him to "hold fast the form of sound words, *which thou hast heard of me*" (2 Tim. 1:13). Sound doctrine has to be made up of sound words, the words that Timothy had heard from Paul.

How Fast Are We Talking Here?

How "fast" should pastors hold the faithful Word that Paul taught Timothy and Titus, and the rest of us, in his epistles? Well, after God allowed Satan to take away Job's health, his wealth, and his family, He used that same phrase to say of Job, "still he *holdeth fast* his integrity" (Job 2:3). Pastor, will you hold the truth of Paul's gospel *that fast* in the face of such overwhelming adversity? Will you say with Job's degree of conviction,

"...I will *not* remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I *hold fast*, and will not let it go...so long as I live" (Job 27:5,6).

Pastor, is that how fast you'll hold to Pauline truth if you lose everything *you* hold dear, as Job did?

Will you hold the truth as fast as Tribulation saints, whom the Lord warned, "hold fast...if

therefore thou shalt *not* watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (Rev. 3:3). Those believers will have to hold *their* truth fast, the Scriptures given to Israel, and endure to the end of the Tribulation *to be saved* (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). *Your* salvation doesn't depend upon how fast you hold your truth—but you should hold it fast *as if it did*, as if your very eternal life depended on it. After all, the eternal life of *your hearers* will depend on how tight a grasp you maintain on the truth of Paul's gospel.

If you're *not* a pastor, why not encourage your pastor to stand *firm* with all the pastors who are "holding fast the faithful Word?"

Hold Fast or the Gainsayers Will Get Ya!

Of course, if you're not a pastor, you're probably wondering, "What's a gainsayer?" (Tit. 1:9)? Well, a gainsayer is someone who contradicts what you say. A gainsayer *in the Bible* is someone who contradicts what *God* says *in His Word*. And interestingly enough, each time the word *gainsay* is used in the Bible, it is used of men who contradicted God's Word *dispensationally*.

For instance, Jude talked about "the gainsaying of Core" (Jude 1:11). If you don't remember who Core was,

"...Korah...and Dathan and Abiram...gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them...*all the congregation are holy, every one of them...wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation...?*" (Num. 16:1-3).

In the Law, God had made it clear that He had sanctified Moses

and Aaron, setting them apart from all others in Israel as holy unto Himself. But Core chose to *gainsay* His Word by insisting that *all* the people were holy. This was a dispensational error. All the congregation of Israel *will* be holy in the coming kingdom of heaven on earth. God has promised that they will be “an holy *nation*” and “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). But they weren’t in Moses’ day, so Core was leading a rebellion of *gainsayers*.



Over in the New Testament, the Lord promised His followers, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to *gainsay nor resist*” (Luke 21:15). He made good on that promise at Pentecost, when Peter offered the people of Israel their kingdom (Acts 3:19). We know the Jews *tried* to gainsay and resist this dispensational change, for when Stephen pressed them, we read that “*they were not able to resist* the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10), just as the Lord predicted they would be unable to do.

But as you know, the people of Israel stubbornly clung to the old dispensation of the Law and *refused* Peter’s offer of the new dispensation of the kingdom when

they stoned Stephen. That’s how they became “a disobedient *and gainsaying people*” (Rom. 10:21), people who contradicted God’s Word dispensationally.

The Apostle Peter showed a spiritually superior attitude when it came to his willingness to accept dispensational change. When the Lord later told him to go minister to a Gentile, something that was “unlawful” under the Law of Moses (Acts 10:28), Peter obeyed this new dispensational command “*without gainsaying*” (Acts 10:29). The times they were a-changing, and Peter did not resist them.

The gainsayers in Crete (Titus 1:9), where Titus was stationed (1:5), were the men Paul mentioned in the next verse in our text:

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision” (Titus 1:10).

How to Rule the Unruly

The dictionary defines the word “unruly” as *people who don’t want to be ruled*. That’s probably why the only other people in the Bible who are called “unruly” are people who didn’t want to be ruled *by the rulers of their local church*. Speaking of those spiritual leaders, Paul told the Thessalonians,

“...know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And...esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake...warn them that are unruly” (1 Thes. 5:12-14).

See the connection? After speaking about *rulers*, Paul told them to warn the *unruly*. In the context, these were obviously people who didn’t want to be

ruled by the church's pastor and elders.

But how could Paul have known that there were unruly men who didn't want to be ruled by leaders in Crete? Their churches didn't *have* rulers yet! Remember, Paul had left Titus in Crete to *ordain* elders (Titus 1:5). So how did Paul know that some of the Cretians were unruly?

Well, it was because of *the way* that pastors are supposed to rule. God explains how they are to rule when He wrote,

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God...” (Heb. 13:7).

Pastors are supposed to rule by *teaching the Word*. Paul expressed it this way in his letter to the Corinthians:

“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2 Cor. 1:24).

Pastors aren't supposed to rule by having “dominion” over God's people—that is, by *dominating* them. People stand by faith, and faith comes by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). That means pastors are supposed to rule by teaching people the Word, *and then letting the Word rule them*. That's the only way pastors can be “helpers of your joy.” Beloved, the only way you are going to have any joy in life is if you let God's Word *rule* your life!

But that's how Paul knew there were unruly men in Crete. When he was there among them, he had seen that there were Cretians who didn't want to be ruled by the Word that he had taught them. So he told Titus to ordain

some elders to teach those unruly men *more* of God's Word.

The Backup Plan

Perhaps you are thinking, “How would that help? If they didn't want to be ruled by God's Word, why ordain leaders to give them *more* of His Word?”

The answer is that God doesn't have a “Plan B” when it comes to helping people with their joy! That means when people don't want to be ruled by the Word, a pastor shouldn't chuck the Scriptures and look around for something else to give them. Instead, he should continue to teach the Word, for God's backup plan is the same as His original plan. That's because growing in the Word is a believer's only hope of living the joyous Christian life God wants each of us to richly enjoy.

“The times they
were a-changing,
and Peter did not
resist them.”




Finally, when Paul says that these unruly men were “specially of the circumcision,” that suggests that there was a *particular* rule that Paul had taught them by which they didn't want to be ruled. He was probably thinking of the rule he described to the Galatians:

“...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

“And as many as walk according to *this rule*, peace be on them...” (Gal. 6:15,16).

Does that sound like a rule that unruly talkers of the circumcision wouldn’t care for? When Paul taught them that circumcision didn’t matter in the dispensation of grace, that the only thing that mattered was being “a new creature” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), those unruly talkers of the circumcision refused to be ruled by that rule! They were making the

dispensational error of thinking that circumcision was still part of God’s program, and gainsaying the faithful words of sound doctrine that Titus had received from Paul for the new dispensation.

Beloved, the only answer to dispensational error today is “holding fast the faithful Word” *that we have heard from Paul*. Pauline truth alone can save us from any and all *other* dispensational errors. Why not join your pastor in holding it fast! 

Question Box

“Is there Scripture that bans earrings and other body piercings for Christians?”

Earrings for women are often seen in a favorable light in Scripture (Gen. 24:22; Ex. 35:22; Num. 31:50; Pr. 25:12; Ezek. 16:12). The men in Israel also wore them (Ex. 32:2; 35:22), although that may or may not have been because earrings were associated with slavery (Ex. 21:6), and they had just escaped from slavery in Egypt. Either way, they are certainly not associated with slavery today.

Judges 8:24 talks about some men who “had golden earrings, *because they were Ishmaelites*,” and so we see that such ornaments on men were at one time associated with people other than God’s people in Israel, just as they were once associated with pirates in more modern times. This suggests that male earrings might have an associative significance that changes with the times, and this is something that should be taken into consideration for any man contemplating them in our own day.

The Bible doesn’t mention other piercings, other than when God was displeased with the people of Israel and vowed to “take away...their...nose jewels” (Isa. 3:18-21). But this was because He wanted them to mourn and not rejoice. If we say that He vowed to take away their nose jewels because they are wrong in and of themselves, we’d have to argue that “bracelets” and “bonnets” and “headbands” and “rings” are also wrong, for God vowed to strip them of these ornaments as well in that passage.

So the question of body piercings under grace seems to come down to a matter of personal conviction, and in such cases the apostle of grace advises us to be gracious, not judgmental (Rom. 14:3).—Pastor Kurth



BBS Letter Excerpts

From Iowa:

"Appreciate the TV program—clear and to the point! Enclosed find check #...to use where you see fit."

From Illinois:

"Your *Searchlight* magazine and *Transformed By Grace* television program have been most informative in my life. Bless you!"

From Iowa:

"I have been leading a Bible study group the last two years since our previous leader passed on to be with God. I am just finishing Revelation 17,18, so when I say that Volume 4 is just in time and how thankful I am for your guiding resources, you can be sure I mean it...without your help...I would be in grave trouble." (Pastor Stam was there for us when we were learning. We're glad to be there for you. -Ed).

From Georgia:

"Your recent phone call regarding Ironside's attempt to smear Pauline dispensationalism was very thoughtful, and much appreciated. Tell Christine that the article you sent will be very helpful...I now have all the ammunition to sufficiently answer the criticism."

From Minnesota:

"Thank you for great messages rightly divided. I pass them on to others who don't know what the mystery is. To me Paul's message is the only one that makes sense."

From Texas:

"Thank you so much for teaching me how to rightly divide the Word of truth. I am finally at peace with my salvation and my God."

From New York:

"Thank you for your dedication to the Word of God, rightly divided. I came to that revelation in 1983. I immediately ordered all of Pastor Stam's books, and started pastoring in 1984 in a church we started in our home. By the grace of God, still serving the LORD."

From Wisconsin:

"I was wondering if you have your *Transformed by Grace* business cards available to purchase. I am looking to purchase 50 of them. I would like to add them in our Christmas card mailings this year. We have enjoyed hearing the lessons and want to get the word out about your TV Ministry." (Yes! See the news item concerning this on page 30. -Ed).

From South Carolina:

"I have read both of your replies and YES! They were very helpful... Wow! I can really see it...I have my work cut out for me as I learn how to express it well and most importantly, Biblically correct."

From our Inbox:

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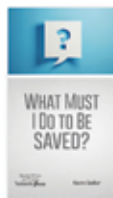
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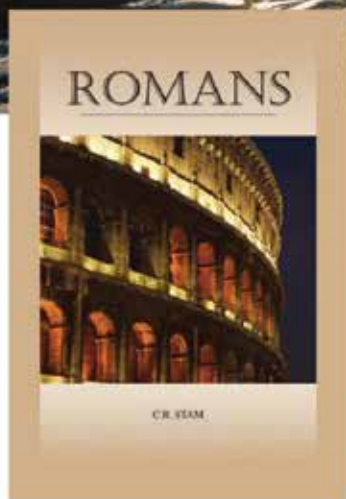
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News *and* Announcements

Still thinking about going to Israel with us? We set a registration date deadline of January 26th for a group airfare contract, but it is not too late to decide to join us. The projected cost of \$2,800 may vary at this late date, but as of this writing, there are still a few openings available. But don't delay, contact us today. If you snooze, you may lose out on the trip of a lifetime!

We mean business! We are *serious* about getting the word out about our new *Transformed By Grace* television program. That's why we've printed up some handy business cards announcing the broadcast and the times and places where it can be seen. If you'd like to help us get down to business in making the program known, you can take care of business by ordering a supply of these cards. The choice is yours. Go about your business if you want to, but why not be about your Father's business instead and help us make known the riches of God's grace. Order your free business cards today!

Meet you in Mississippi in March! Our good friends at *Grace Bible Ministry Church* of Tupelo have extended a warm welcome to BBS president Pastor Kevin Sadler to come and direct their study of God's Word at a March 16,17 event that will make St. Patrick green with envy on the weekend when everyone else will be thinking of him. Plan to observe the time-honored Protestant tradition of "the wearin' of the orange," and contact Pastor John Smith to let him know you're coming at (662) 706-4086, or at gracebibleministry@att.net.

Arizona Bible Conference: If Phoenix in March sounds inviting, here's your invitation to attend the *West Valley Grace Fellowship* Bible conference scheduled for March 22-24. Pastor Mark Dilley has invited *Berean Searchlight* editor Pastor Ricky Kurth to come and open the Scriptures to all who attend with an open mind and an open heart. If you're open to meeting some new saints and renewing some old acquaintances, Pastor Dilley has the answers to any questions you might have about this upcoming event: (623) 377-3071, jjdster@gmail.com.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

Tupelo Bible Conference, March 16-17, Tupelo, MS

Phoenix Bible Conference, March 22-24, Sun City West, AZ

Best of Israel Tour, May 7-16

BBF Summer Conference, June 16-20, Tipp City, OH



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—C. R. Stam