

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT™

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

December 2022



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From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

When a year draws to an end, I like to look back on it and reflect on how well I spent my time. If you are as conscious of Paul's admonition to be "redeeming the time" as I try to be (Eph. 5:16), you might be interested to hear about a time-saving Bible principle that I learned soon after I returned to *Berean Bible Society* over twenty years ago.

As I responded to the emails and snail mails that arrive here at BBS daily with Bible questions, I noticed that some people only asked questions to draw me into a debate. These kinds of questions came from people who oppose what we believe and teach, but I didn't mind engaging with them, for I had spent my life learning Bible answers to any and all heresies, and felt it was my duty to follow in Paul's footsteps in what he called "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7).

But as I exchanged letter after letter with these folks, I noticed two things. First, I could usually tell that I was writing to someone who showed no inkling of being open to any understanding of Scripture that differed from their own. Secondly, I noticed that as I spent oodles of time on these brethren, it was harder to keep up with my correspondence with sincere Bible students who *were* open to the truth.

That's when the Spirit brought Titus 3:10 to mind: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject." I'd often wondered why God put that verse in the Bible, but in the context of these heretical, time-consuming correspondents, even a thick-headed believer like me was able to figure out God's intent in writing those words. Ever after that, I would exchange one or two letters with argumentative brethren, and then explain that to engage in further correspondence I would have to be disobedient to the Word of God. I would then remind the correspondent that *he too* would have to disobey God to continue to write *me*, for in his mind *I* was the heretic. The beauty of Titus 3:10 is that it works both ways!

When I was a younger pastor, my pride would never have let me disengage with men like that, lest they conclude I had no answers for their errors. But with age came the wisdom to know that redeeming the time is more important than pride. If you feel the same way, you might want to begin the new year with a resolution to keep Titus 3:10 in mind as you go about fighting the good fight of the faith. The internet gives us more opportunity to engage in "the defense of the gospel" than ever before (Phil. 1:17), but let's make the most of it by obeying this crucially important Bible principle.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Ricky Kurth



His Name Shall Be...

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

“Unto us” in this verse is unto the nation of Israel, for the Lord was “sent” by the Father “unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). As Christ came from heaven, He took on flesh and became the Son of man, thus, “unto us a Child is born.” But because the Child is also the Son of God, the prophecy further states, “unto us a Son is given.”

Isaiah then gives five titles that are aspects of Christ’s character, nature, and relationship to mankind. Billy Sunday once said, “There are two hundred and fifty-six names given in the Bible for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose this was because He was infinitely beyond all that any one name could express.”

“Wonderful”: Everything about Christ is wonderful. In wonderful love and grace, He came to this world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). His birth, life, works, words, death, resurrection, and His working among the nations under grace are all wonderful. The glory of Who He is and what He has done for us should fill each of us with wonder.

“Counsellor”: Christ is worthy of our praise because He is Wonderful, and He is worthy to be followed because He is the Counselor. He is the only One fit to guide our lives. Out of His great love for us, He teaches and counsels us through the true wisdom of the Scriptures, rightly divided.

“The mighty God”: As we remember Christ’s birth, it seems a paradox that the helpless infant in the manger was *the mighty God*. By His almighty power, He created all things, and the Creator came to this world to be our Savior (Col. 1:16,20). And the all-powerful God paid for all our sins and rose from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

“The everlasting Father”: Christ is eternal and “from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). Calling Christ “Father” does not mean that the Son is also the Father. The Father and Son are two distinct Persons of the Godhead. The name means He would eternally treat His children, the children of Israel, like a loving, devoted father.

“The Prince of Peace”: At the birth of the Prince of Peace and Israel’s King, the angelic host praised God, “saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). And under grace, we find peace with God through Him (Rom. 5:1), and His peace resides within us (15:13), a peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

—Pastor Kevin Sadler

Is It Ever Okay to Lie?

(An article based on studies that will be reflected in our upcoming *Grace Study Bible*)

PASTOR RICKY KURTH
Berean Searchlight Editor

A boss once confronted his employee, saying: “Armstrong, I heard the reason you didn’t come to work yesterday was that you were playing golf.” Armstrong protested, “That’s a rotten lie! And I have the fish to prove it.”

Speaking of lying, after the people of Israel entered the promised land, Joshua sent some spies into Jericho. When Jericho’s king heard about it, he suspected that Rahab the harlot was housing them, and demanded that she give them up. But she said,

“There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them” (Josh. 2:4,5).

Rahab said, as it were, “They were here, but they left about the

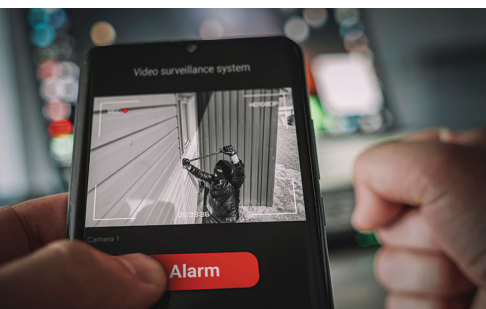
time they lock the gates of the city. I bet that means they were trying to get *out* of the city before the gates closed. You know, if you leave now, you just might be able to catch up with them.”

But none of what she was telling those soldiers was true! She knew whence they were from, and she *hid* them (v. 4). This raises the question of whether it’s ever okay to lie. And the answer is *no*, it’s never okay to lie! But that’s not *technically* what Rahab was doing here.

You see, the precise dictionary definition of a lie is: “to utter falsehood...*with an immoral design*.”¹ Is that what Rahab was doing here? No! If a bad guy breaks into your house and asks where your kids are, you’re not lying if you tell him they’re upstairs when they’re actually downstairs. It’s not immoral for

1. Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, p. 984.

you to buy some time while you wait for the police to arrive, or



your oldest son to come upstairs with his shotgun.

Another definition for *lie* is: “to say or do that which is designed to deceive another, *when he has a right to know the truth*, or when morality requires a just representation.”² Did the king’s messengers have a right to know Rahab was hiding the spies? No! God gave Jericho and all the land of Canaan to Israel. That means the Canaanites had no legal right to it, and *that* means they had no right to know the truth about where the spies were.

A Tailor-Made Hiding Spot

Now let’s read on in Joshua 2 to learn *where* Rahab hid the spies.

“But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof” (Josh. 2:6).

Here we have proof that while Rahab may have been called a harlot in this passage (v. 1), she

had evidently retired from being a working girl. Only a *seamstress* would have stalks of flax laid out in order on her roof. In those days, flax was used to make *linen* for clothing—but only after you *dried* it by laying it out in an orderly fashion in the sun. That means Rahab had gone from being a lady of ill repute to someone like the woman we read about in Proverbs 31:

“...a virtuous woman...seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands” (Prov. 31:10,13).

Rahab now had more in common with *virtuous* women than she had with ladies of the evening.

But her dark past as a prostitute seems to have made her pretty good at telling untruths, for as we read on we see that the king’s storm troopers *bought* her story hook, line, and sinker:

“And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate” (Josh. 2:7).

The king’s soldiers would naturally head toward the “fords” of the river,³ for they knew the Jews were still camped on the other side of the river, making it easy for them to conclude that the spies would be heading toward the Jordan to rejoin their people.

After the soldiers left, Rahab checked in on the spies:

2. Ibid. If you’d like to study other Bible examples where God’s people did not provide a just representation, here are a few: Exodus 1:15-20, 1 Samuel 20:6, 1 Samuel 21:2,8, and 1 Kings 22:22.

3. Areas where the water was low enough to wade across.

“And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

“And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you” (Josh. 2:8,9).

Now here we have to ask *how* she knew God had given Israel the land. To find the answer, it helps to know that God had given it to them *500 years earlier* when

“...the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, *Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites...*” (Gen. 15:18-21).

Those verses describe the Promised Land, and the land’s inhabitants that Satan sent into Canaan after he heard God send Abram there back in Genesis 11. Abram delayed going there until years later in Genesis 12:4, and by that time Satan’s men were already there (v. 6).

But after Moses recorded *in the Bible* how God gave Abram the land, God made sure that *copies* of the Bible got around to people everywhere. We see proof of that throughout the Scriptures, and we see it here when Rahab told the spies that she was aware of how God had given them the land of Canaan.

This means that Canaanites like Rahab *also* knew God promised to help Israel conquer Canaan (Exod. 23:31), something she told the spies had struck fear into their hearts.

A Holy Terror

But to say that the people of *Jericho* were terrified of Israel was really saying something, for it was protected by *massive* stone walls, the ruins of which can still be seen today. How scared would you be if you lived in a gated community as secure as that? The citizens of Jericho were! And verse 10 goes on to explain *why*.

“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt....”

Once the people of Jericho heard that God parted the Red Sea for the Jews, they knew there wasn’t *anything* too hard for the God of Israel—including the toppling of their impregnable walls!

God actually *predicted* their fear when He told His people,

“I will send My fear before thee...” (Exod. 23:27).

“How scared would you be if you lived in a gated community as secure as that?”



He even predicted that the Red Sea crossing would be the thing to *cause* their fear. Right after the Jews crossed it in Exodus 14, we read:

“Then sang Moses...this song unto the LORD....Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath He cast into

the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea....The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina” (Exod. 15:1,4,14).

But if those Palestinian Canaanites were frightened of God because He parted the Red Sea, how come Deuteronomy 2:24,25 says:

“I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite...contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble....”

If the Red Sea crossing terrified the Canaanites, why does this verse say they wouldn’t “begin” to fear Israel until the “day” came when they conquered kings like Sihon and Og?

A Giant Panic Attack

Well, what do we know about Og? Right after the Jews forced Sihon to assume room temperature, Moses said,

“...the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And...only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants...” (Deut. 3:3,4,11).

Og was one of those *giants* we first read about in Genesis 6 when

“...the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And...there were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that” (Gen. 6:2-4).

Those fallen angels mated with women and fathered a *race* of giants, the same kind of giants that the 12 spies told Moses they saw in Canaan (Num. 13:33). The very reason Satan *planted* them in Canaan was to try to keep Israel from being able to gain possession of the land God gave them. And “Sihon king of the Amorites” (Deut. 3:2) was *also* a giant king of a giant people (Amos 2:9).



That explains why the giants *in Jericho* didn’t begin to fear Israel’s God until they heard that Israel had conquered giant kings like Og and Sihon. Sure, they were impressed with the parting of the Red Sea, along with all the other inhabitants of Canaan. But in the back of their minds they were thinking, “Hey, even if Israel’s God is able to bring down our walls, *we’re still a race of giants*, and the people of Israel are mere mortals. We’ll grind their bones to make our bread,” as a mythical giant once boasted in an equally mythical story. But once Og and Sihon fell to Israel, it proved to them that that old saying is true: “The bigger they are *the harder they fall*.”

I should add that when Deuteronomy 3:11 says, “only Og... remained of the...giants,” that didn’t mean he was the last giant *on the planet*. We know he wasn’t, for centuries later David rocked a giant named Goliath to sleep with a sling. Deuteronomy 3 was just saying Og was the last giant *on the wilderness side of the Jordan River*.

But the people of Israel had no reason to fear Satan’s giants, for God told them:

“There shall *no man* be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon *all the land that ye shall tread upon...*” (Deut. 11:25).

God promised His people that “no man”—not even *giant* men—would be able to stand before them! I’m sure that reassurances like that were very welcome among the people of Israel. Remember, they’d just spent 400 years as slaves in Egypt. That means they had no clue as to how to wage war against mere *mortal* enemies, let alone demonic giants.

A Giant Meltdown

As we read on in Joshua 2, Rahab tells the spies,

“And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Josh. 2:11).

That part about melting the hearts of the Canaanites with

fear and terror is *also* something God predicted about the Canaanites, when He said,

“...the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; *all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away*. Fear and dread shall fall upon them” (Exod. 15:15,16).

Here I should point out that the things that happened to Israel back in these days were “types” or *pictures* of things that will happen to Israel *again* in the future, during the seven years of Tribulation that will follow the Rapture. We know the Lord expected His twelve apostles to live to see the Tribulation, for He told them what to do when they saw the antichrist (Matt. 24:15,16). And true to the type of the two spies we’re seeing here (Josh 2:1,4), the Lord sent the twelve forth *two by two* (Mark 6:7,12). Then,

“...the Lord appointed *other seventy also*, and sent *them two and two*⁴...into every city and place...” (Luke 10:1).

The interruption of the dispensation of the mystery kept the Lord’s disciples from entering the Tribulation. But after the Rapture a *new* crop of saved Jews is going to go forth to preach in the Tribulation *two by two*, just as the Lord instructed, and just as we see typified here in Joshua 2.

And when those Jews go forth two by two in that terrible day, they’ll *also* have to keep in mind something the Lord said a few verses later in Luke 10:

“I send you forth as *lambs among wolves*” (Luke 10:3).

4. We would say “two by two,” but this is how the Bible words it (cf. Gen. 7:9,15).

Doesn't that sound like what happened when Joshua (who was a type of Christ) sent those two spies into Jericho, a city filled with *giants*? And there is going to be a *new* crop of giants in the Tribulation. The prophet Daniel predicted *more* unfallen angels will

“...mingle themselves with the seed of men...” (Dan. 2:43).

That *mingling* is going to produce *another* crop of giants who will be more than happy to wolf down that new crop of saved Jews.

A Peace Offering

Do you know what *else* the Lord told His followers as He sent them forth two by two?

“And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again” (Luke 10:5,6).

Compare that to what we read about Rahab:

“...Rahab...received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31).

It's even possible that the spies in Joshua 2 did what the Lord instructed His disciples to do in Matthew 10:11, where He said,

“...into whatsoever city...ye... enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide.”

If the spies did that when they arrived in Jericho, that would explain how they knew to go to Rahab's house. The people of Jericho would respond to inquiries like that with directions to the home of the hooker who was rumored to have retired because she had converted to Judaism. That would also explain how the

king knew where to look for them, and send his soldiers to Rahab's house to apprehend the spies he'd heard had entered his city.



“...Israel's past is a dress rehearsal for her future...”

All we know for sure is that when Antichrist starts *persecuting* saved Jews in the Tribulation, believing Gentiles like Rahab are going to have to *hide* them, like she hid these two spies. The psalmist predicted all of this when he prayed,

“O God....Thine enemies make a tumult....They have taken crafty counsel...against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance” (Psa. 83:1-4).

Some of the “hidden ones” in this prophetic psalm are Jews who will hide *themselves* in the wilderness from the face of the beast (Matt. 24:15,16), but some will be hidden from him by Gentiles. When that starts to happen, God will have some advice for the nations of the Gentiles. He spoke prophetically to one of them, saying:

“Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler” (Isa. 16:4).

The “spoiler” there is the Beast. When he starts killing God’s people, God’s advice to Gentile nations like Moab will be to hide Jews from the beast—just as we see pictured here in Joshua 2 with Rahab.

Rahab actually *got saved* by hiding those two spies (James 2:25,26). She’s a type of how Gentiles in the Tribulation will get saved, as we can clearly see from the description of the judgment of the Gentile nations the Lord gives us in Matthew 25:31-40. As it says there, Tribulation

Gentiles are going to get saved *by taking in the Lord’s brethren in Israel*—just as we’re seeing typified with Rahab and the spies.

I’ve always said that Israel’s past is a dress rehearsal for her future, and we see it here again. In many cases, the details found in the types in Israel’s past help us flesh out the details lacking in the prophecies of her future—if you’re aware you should be looking for those details in the types, that is.

And now you are!



Question Box

“Is it wrong to pray Paul’s prayers, as grace pastors often tell us to do? What about the Lord’s warning about ‘vain repetitions’?”

The key word in Matthew 6:7 is the word “vain.” The Lord Himself repeated Himself in prayer during His prayer in Gethsemane. In Matthew 26, we read that He prayed (v. 39), then prayed again (v. 42), and then “prayed the third time, *saying the same words*” (v. 44). But there was certainly nothing “vain” about His repetition.

As I respond to the Bible questions that we receive on a daily basis here at BBS, I can often tell I’m sharing Pauline truth with someone who has never heard it before. In such cases, I often pray Paul’s prayer “that the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened” (Eph. 1:18). For grace believers struggling with a particular aspect of the truth, I usually pray that they “might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). For well-grounded grace believers, I pray that they will “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10), and “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1). There’s nothing vain about those repetitions either!

—Pastor Kurth



Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Christian Love

The stories behind most of our great hymns of the faith are nothing short of amazing. A good example is John Fawcett, who came to a saving knowledge of Christ at an evangelistic meeting held by George Whitfield in 1756. Shortly after the Lord called him into the ministry, John accepted his first pastorate at a small, impoverished assembly in Wainsgate, England. After several years at the church, with his family growing larger in number, he was struggling to make ends meet; therefore, he reluctantly accepted a call to pastor a large church in London.

When the day arrived to move, the members of the congregation gathered around the wagons in tears to bid their beloved pastor farewell. Pastor and Mrs. Fawcett had grown so close to the congregation that it broke their heart to see them weeping uncontrollably. They both agreed they could not leave these dear saints and instructed those who were helping, to unload the wagons. A short time later, Pastor Fawcett was preparing a message when he incorporated the words of what would become one of the most beloved hymns of the Christian faith.

Blest be the tie that binds / Our hearts in Christian love!

The fellowship of kindred minds / Is like to that above.

When we asunder part / It gives us inward pain;

But we shall still be joined in heart, / And hope to meet again.

The world will never understand the depth of our fellowship with those of like-precious faith. Brother Stam's good friend, Pastor Edward Drew, once shared these insightful words with his congregation:

"Fellowship is the knitting together of all saved souls into a unity and oneness in Christ. If you are saved, you will feel a nearness to all others who are saved, and you will find it a peculiar joy that you cannot feel in any other human relationship. It is wrought only by the Holy Spirit, and is a very precious thing among believers. Unfortunately, it is often marred in our assemblies. It is God's method of blessing His Church, and so it is the purpose of Satan to mar and spoil it among God's people. Where there is true fellowship there is blessing that cannot be attained in any other way."

Although the above stanzas of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" were written centuries after the ministry of the Apostle Paul, they pretty well sum up his relationship with the saints at Philippi. The mutual tie that bound their *hearts in Christian love* was Christ. When they were torn *asunder* by Paul's unjust imprisonment, it caused both Paul and them *inward pain*. But they were still *joined in heart* and longed to *meet again* (Phil. 2:24). —Pastor Paul M. Sadler



God's Gift to Simeon and Anna

PASTOR KEVIN **SADLER**
BBS President

"A man was sleeping when his wife shook him and said, 'Wake up, someone is breaking in!' The man had gone through this almost every night for 20 years, and he knew that the only way he would get any rest was to go and check it out. This time, however, there was a man with a gun who entered to rob the house. As the thief was about to flee the man said, 'You have to come with me and meet my wife.' Astounded, the thief said, 'Why would you want me to meet your wife?' The man replied, 'Well, she's been expecting you for 20 years.'"¹

Luke 2 tells us about two people who were expecting the Savior for many years and had the blessing of meeting the Christ child, God's gift of salvation.

A Man of Faith and Hope

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the

Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:25-26).

In the midst of the spiritual deadness and darkness in Israel at the time of our Lord's birth, there was a godly remnant who sincerely believed the Scriptures and looked for the promised Messiah's coming. Simeon was one of those people. The only things we are told about Simeon are the things that matter most to God, those things pertaining to his faith and his personal walk with the Lord.

We are told that he was "just" and "devout" (v. 25). "Just" means he was upright in his moral character. "Devout" means he was devoted to God and to His Word, and thus, at that time, he carefully adhered to the Law of Moses in faith. Simeon was a man of faith and hope, as he was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." He knew the Word and trusted in



the promises made to the nation Israel, and thus he longed for the promised Messiah.

“The consolation of Israel” is a messianic consolation. When we console someone, we give solace or comfort to them. This is what the Messiah will give to Israel, a consolation, and He will bring great comfort to Israel through His earthly kingdom.

Luke makes special mention in verse 25 that “the Holy Ghost was upon him.” By the ministry of the Spirit to Simeon, “it was revealed unto him...that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (v. 26). To this devout man, who fervently looked for Israel’s consolation, God in His mercy gave him a unique promise and blessing: that he would not die “before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” The Lord’s Christ is the Lord’s Anointed, that anointed Prophet, Priest, and King Who is the Messiah of Israel foretold in the law and the prophets. We can only imagine the anxious anticipation that filled this man’s heart

as he waited for this promise to be fulfilled with absolute certainty in his lifetime.

The Promise Fulfilled

“And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:27-32).

By the Holy Spirit that “was upon him,” Simeon was led to go into the temple. And he entered the temple just before a working-class couple brought in a 6-week-old Child to present to the Lord and to bring a sacrifice for the sake of the mother’s purification in accordance with the law (vv. 22-24). Then the Holy Spirit did another work in Simeon’s life by showing him that this Child was

the One, the Holy One of Israel, the long-promised Messiah.

And Simeon's joy overflowed. It wasn't good enough just to see Him, however; this godly man *needed to hold this baby*. Thus, he took the Lord in his arms and he "blessed God" for Him, and for the privilege of meeting the Lord's Christ.

Verses 29-32 record what Simeon said as he held our Lord. Now that the dearest wish of his heart had come to pass and the Spirit's promise to him had been kept, Simeon felt *ready* to "depart," and that he could do so "in peace." Simeon told the Lord about his desire to depart, and then, by the Spirit, he said, "For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation." What did his eyes see? He saw a Baby. He saw a Person. Salvation is found in the Person of God's Son, the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 31 and 32 reveal that the devout Simeon knew the Word of God and his hope. He knew that the Messiah is God's provision and source of salvation which He had "prepared before the face of all people." Under God's prophetic program, salvation began with Israel but was always to be extended beyond Israel. In Isaiah 45:22 God proclaims, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

And Simeon understood God's plans for *how* the world was to be reached under His program with Israel. The world was to be saved through Israel; the Gentiles, the nations, had to come to

God through one nation: Israel. Israel's Messiah would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and He would make Israel that light and blessing to draw the nations to the living God (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 60:1-3; Acts 3:25-26). Simeon recognized that the Glory of God's people Israel had come and, when His kingdom was established, God's purpose for Israel would be carried out as He intended.

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22



Simeon's Prophecies

"And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:33-35).

Joseph and Mary marveled at Simeon's words and these truths from Scripture concerning this Child. But notice that it says "Joseph and His mother" not His father and His mother. The Holy Spirit carefully guards the doctrine of the virgin birth with

these precise words. Christ was born of a virgin and Joseph was not His biological father.

In verses 34-35, Simeon turned to Joseph and Mary to bless them and to prophesy by the Spirit concerning things to come in Christ's earthly ministry. Speaking to Mary, Simeon stated that "this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." As Isaiah 8:14 says of the Messiah, "And He shall be...for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel." That is, many in Christ's earthly ministry would stumble and fall in their rejection of Him, but others would rise and stand by their faith in Him, finding salvation and life in Him.

Simeon also prophesied that He would be "a sign which shall be spoken against." In the Lord's earthly ministry, He was continually spoken against, despised, rejected, opposed, and was subjected to contempt.

The first part of verse 35 is in a parentheses, so what is stated after it is connected with the last statement of verse 34. In the opposition to Christ, Simeon said that the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed. The people's reaction toward Christ would lay bare the true thoughts, intents, and nature of their hearts, as many would show that they "loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

The first half of Luke 2:35, as a parenthesis, demonstrates to what lengths the opposition against Christ would go, leading to His crucifixion and death. And Simeon told Mary that "a sword shall

pierce through thy own soul also." Mary, too, would suffer because of her Son being persecuted. But her suffering has nothing to do with your salvation, or mine, or hers. Her suffering was a natural result of the relationship of a mother to her son and her love for her Child. As it would be for any mother, her heart broke watching her Son die, the Son whom she brought into this world and raised.



At the Cross, Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled. The term "sword" refers to a large, broad, heavy sword, and Simeon describes the anguish of seeing her Son die as being like having such a sword thrust straight through Mary's soul. By this prophecy, we see the grace and love of God for Mary, as the Spirit, through Simeon forewarned her and prepared her for what was to come.

A Woman of Faith and Hope

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phineas, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from



the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38).

Next, we are introduced to a faithful woman named Anna, who, like Simeon, was “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” In these verses, we learn that Anna was a prophetess and was of the tribe of Asher.

Anna “was of a great age” at 84 years old. She had lost her husband after seven years of marriage and remained a widow for the rest of her life. Being married only a short time and then widowed, she knew suffering and loss but she had not become bitter. And as an elderly woman, she had not lost hope. Anna devoted her life to God. She was always at the temple serving the Lord “with fastings and prayers night and day,” never missing any public service in the temple.

By the providence of God, and His mercy toward her, Anna came into the presence of the Lord as Simeon was praising God for the Child, the long-promised Messiah. Because of her faithfulness

in being at the temple, she did not miss this important event. Anna then also began thanking God for the Redeemer.

Anna took it a step further than Simeon, who had held the Child and blessed God for Him, in that she started spreading the good news. The prophetess turned into an evangelist! She went around the temple and out into the city of Jerusalem itself spreading the word to all those “that looked for redemption,” that the Redeemer, the Messiah, the Glory of Israel had come. Her joy led her to action and to want others to know the good news and to share in her joy. We certainly can learn from her zeal for the Lord.

How thankful we all can be “that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). By God’s love and grace, He provided the greatest gift, His Son, to be the perfect provision for our salvation. As our apostle wrote, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift” (2 Cor. 9:15). Now, like Anna, let’s tell someone the good news!



1. <https://www.ajokeaday.com/jokes/misc-jokes/finally-i5mh58t18x>



WOMAN *to* WOMAN

“Industrialist Charles Schwab was a key figure in Andrew Carnegie’s steel empire. Frustrated with his inability to get everything done, he once reluctantly agreed to meet with a consultant named Ivy Lee....He told Schwab to make a list of the six most important things he could do the next day to further the overall health and function of U.S. Steel. At the end of the day, Schwab was to review the list, move anything that had not been finished to the top of the next day’s list, and then add enough items to make a total of six again. Within fifteen minutes, the meeting concluded. Lee told Schwab to follow this practice for thirty days, and then send him a payment based on how much Schwab thought the advice was worth. After the month ended, Schwab sent Lee a check for \$25,000!”¹

Recently, I was making a list of everything in my house that I wanted to do before the holidays, but even *making* the list was getting a little overwhelming *and long*. Then I remembered reading this illustration and thought, “Okay, just six things. If I start with just the six most important things, I’ve got this!”

This illustration is applicable to our spiritual lives as well. There have been times in my spiritual life when I think of all I want to do and the list gets so big, and overwhelming that I put the list away for when I have more time.

With the New Year right around the corner, it’s a perfect time to begin with a list of just six things that are the most important. Create a prayer list of six things or people, and when one item on our prayer list’s is answered, put another on that list and keep praying. Make a list of six passages of Scripture that you want to memorize or read in the new year, and once you’ve done that put another on and keep reading. Instead of getting overwhelmed with a large plan, just make a small list of what’s most important. Small steps are still steps in a forward direction.

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).

God tells us in Galatians to not be weary in well-doing, to not stop, to keep going, and keep serving Him, for in due season we will reap, and our reward is far greater than a check for \$25,000! —Jessica Sadler

1. <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/do-the-most-important-things-first>.



An Open Letter to a Pentecostalist (Part 2)

PASTOR KEN **LAWSON**
BBS Board Member

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles to preach, He commanded them to preach saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5,6). Later He commanded the same apostles to “teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19,20). Still later we see James, Cephas (Peter), and John agreeing to confine their ministry to the circumcision (Jews), while Paul and Barnabas went to the Gentiles (heathen—Gal. 2:9). That is where the great commission given to the twelve apostles in Matthew 28:19,20 went out of commission in view of the further revelation of the ministry of reconciliation given to Paul (2 Cor. 5:18-21). From that point on, there is no evidence that the twelve ever preached to the Gentiles. Peter did visit Antioch (a church among the Gentiles), but rather than having a preaching or teaching ministry there, he was rebuked by Paul before them all (Gal. 2:11-14).

When Jesus sent the twelve apostles to preach, he also said, “Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money: neither have two coats apiece” (Luke 9:3). However, near the end of his ministry, he changed that. He said to them, “But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip...” (Luke 22:35,36). Skeptics and unbelievers have a heyday over Scriptures like those. “Look,” they say, “how can you follow Christ’s teaching when it’s so contradictory?” Indeed, this is a knotty problem for Christians who think all of Jesus’ commands are for our obedience today. Dispensationalists who seek to “rightly divide the Word of Truth” have no problem with these and other similar apparent contradictions. Things were about to change. Jesus was preparing them to minister in His absence, and they would prepare these things for themselves. If they went back to Luke 9:3 and claimed Jesus’ former command, they would be disobeying the later revelation. It is our Lord’s last commands which

are binding on us today. How sad to see sincere Christians referring to the pre-ascension instruction as “the last word of Jesus.” The Lord did speak again from heaven through His mouthpiece, Paul. Christ was speaking in and through him (2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Cor. 14:37). To him it was given to “fulfil (complete) the Word of God; even the Mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col. 1:25-27).

Another question on Acts 2:38. If this is still God’s pattern for today, why does Paul say to the Corinthians, “For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel?” (1 Cor. 1:17). The twelve apostles could never have said this for they were sent to baptize (Matt. 28:19,20). Also, with that little word “but” Paul is contrasting baptism with preaching the Gospel!!! He says in verse 14, as it were, “I thank God that I led none of you to the Lord but Crispus and Gaius.” He also baptized the house of Stephanas, but could not recall whether he baptized any other. Does this sound like Paul thought that water baptism was essential to salvation?

One final point. If baptism is necessary for salvation today, I am not a Christian. I have not been baptized by immersion for the remission of sins, or spoken in tongues as the evidence of salvation, neither have millions of other godly Christians who stand for Paul’s teaching of salvation by grace without works (Rom. 4:5,6). I believe these people have demonstrated abundant evidence of salvation—evidence which cannot be counterfeited. If nothing else, this is proved by the knowledge they have of the things of the Spirit of God (spiritual understanding) which the natural man (unsaved) cannot receive (1 Cor. 2:14).

You may reason that we should be baptized for the remission of sins “just to make sure.” But this would be rebellion against the final revelation concerning salvation—a revelation given through Paul which says to have faith in His shed blood and do nothing (Rom. 4:5; 11:6).

As I read the tract *The Apostle’s Doctrine*, I noticed a definite rebellion against (or ignorance of) Paul’s authority as the Apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 2:9; 1:16; 1 Tim. 2:7; Acts 9:15). While many Christians give lip service to the fact, they fail to grasp the significance of it. Paul was privy to numerous revelations of which the other apostles knew nothing. That is one reason Peter thought Paul’s writings were hard to understand but did recognize them as being Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15,16). He had a distinctive apostleship and preached the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul calls it “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8).

The fact that Paul’s gospel is distinctive and divinely ordained is easily proved from Scripture. As we all recognize, the sum and substance of “the gospel of the grace of God” is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3,4). But when Jesus and the Twelve approached

Jerusalem for the last time, He told them that He would be delivered to the Gentiles, put to death, and rise again the third day. What was their response to this? Did they say, “Thank you Lord for going to the cross and dying for us?” No! It says, “and they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them neither knew they the things which were spoken” (Luke 18:31-34). Think of the ramifications of that statement! The Twelve had been with Jesus Christ for about three years preaching “the gospel of the kingdom” and didn’t even know

**“When you proclaim...faith
in Christ+baptism+living
a godly life...you end up with
a message which
cannot save anybody.”**



that He was to die, much less what that death would accomplish for our redemption! No one can be saved today without a knowledge of the Cross and the fact that Christ died for us and rose again. We have redemption “through faith in His blood” (Rom. 3:25). Not until we come to the revelation given to Paul by the glorified Christ in heaven do we have “the preaching of the cross” as

good news (1 Cor. 1:18). This is also demonstrated by the fact that Paul, as he said, “went up by revelation and communicated unto them [the Twelve] that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles....” This was the first they had heard about it (Gal. 2:2). Later in the passage, he says they saw that Paul had “the gospel of uncircumcision” committed to him just as Peter had “the gospel of the circumcision” committed to him (v. 7). All of this shows the lie of the popular notion that the New Testament presents only one gospel.

If anyone is still not convinced, they need only to compare and contrast Peter’s first recorded message (Acts 2:38) with Paul’s first recorded message (Acts 13:38,39). Christ is central to both—“in the name of Jesus Christ” and “through this man” and “by Him.” Both also resulted in the forgiveness of sins. Beyond that, the two messages are at variance. Peter’s mentions nothing about being justified from all things apart from the Law of Moses by simply believing. And Paul mentions nothing about repentance and water baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Peter’s gospel had in view the offer of the King and the Kingdom to Israel. Paul’s gospel entered when the offer was rejected by the favored nation and God turned to the Gentiles through Paul’s ministry. He is not only called the apostle to the Gentiles but also the apostle of the Gentiles. That makes it possessive—literally the apostle belonging to the Gentiles. As Gentiles, Paul is our apostle for the dispensation of the grace of God (Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3:1-3).

At this point, I am always careful to emphasize that I am not trying to glorify the person of Paul but rather his God-given office as our apostle. Paul himself was nothing (2 Cor. 12:11), but he was always jealous of his God-given authority as God's spokesman. I am always impressed by the way he magnifies the Lord Jesus Christ and debases himself. Paul stands in the same relation to the Gentiles under grace as Moses stood to the people of Israel under the law. Moses' word was authoritative because it was God's Word and any rebellion against Moses was rebellion against God. So it is today with Paul and the Gentiles. How ironic and tragic to see the very people who always preach "the Lordship of Christ" rebelling against Paul's simple gospel of grace.

It is clear to me that as long as John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the twelve apostles preached "the gospel of the kingdom" and ministered "under the law of Moses," salvation was not by faith alone. Not until the introduction of the "gospel of the grace of God" through Paul's ministry do we find all the statements regarding it as a "free gift" received by faith without works or the law (Rom. 3:21-28; 3:5-8,24; 5:1,9; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:6-9,22-29; Eph. 2:8,9; Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5). This again brands Paul's apostleship and message distinctive.


I see three errors that people make in relation to the gospel of grace. First, they say you must work to get saved. Then, they say you must work to keep yourself saved. Finally, they say you must work to prove you are saved. Paul tells me that grace and works are mutually exclusive and that one destroys the other (Rom. 11:6; Gal. 5:4). The attempted introduction and mixture of works with grace only desecrates the "free gift" aspect that is so essential to the gospel of grace (Rom. 3:24; 5:15; 6:23).

When you proclaim a message which is faith in Christ+baptism+living a godly life, etc. you end up with a message which cannot save anybody. Such a faith is not faith at all but rebellion. The Roman Catholics and Jehovah Witnesses have that kind of faith, and most are not saved, although they might have good morals.

Good works are very important in Pauline teaching, but the commands are given only to people who have received the free gift of eternal life (Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:9,10; Titus 2:7; 3:1,14). An old preacher once told me, "You cannot practice the ethics of Jesus until you first receive the nature of Jesus through regeneration" (Titus 3:5). I have never forgotten that. Let's not get the "cart before the horse" regarding good works and salvation! The same grace that brings salvation also teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11,12).

Anyone who still preaches a faith+works salvation is almost 2000 years behind the Biblical doctrine of salvation. There is a coming day

(maybe today) that “our blessed hope” will be realized, and Christ will take us home to be with Himself. God will then take up His dealings with Israel again (Rom. 11:25-27). At that time the “gospel of the kingdom” shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:14). Anyone preaching the “gospel of God’s grace” at that time will be out of God’s will. In the meantime, the dispensation of Grace is still in effect, and Paul pronounces a solemn curse on anyone who preaches any other gospel than what the Gentile Christians received from him (Gal. 1:8,9)

Whew! When I started this letter, I didn’t think it would be so long. But how important to “rightly divide the Word of Truth.” As I have taken considerable time to write to you about these things, I hope you will prayerfully think this through and take the time to look up the Scripture references I cited. 



Let our website help! The best new year’s resolution any believer can make is to read the Word of God through from cover to cover in 2023. On our BBS site, we offer two plans to help you accomplish this most worthy of all personal goals. The first starts in Genesis and tells you how far to read each day to reach the end of Revelation by year’s end. The second has a reading from the Old Testament and the New Testament each day. This helps some saints keep from getting bogged down in some of the more difficult portions of the Old Testament.

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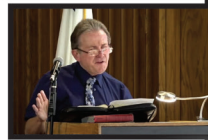
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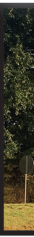
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BBS Letter Excerpts



From Malaysia:

“Do You Hear What I Hear’ [on *Transformed by Grace*] is such an excellent lesson. Your passion for sharing Christ with the unsaved is powerful! Thank you for being a lighthouse for Christ!”

From YouTube:

“I’m convinced that every one of these episodes are custom made for me. Thanks! It’s like the novelty of each new one only builds and never wears off. Loving it!”

From Mississippi:

“My wife and I have been watching your show for a few months. We really like your teaching!”

From Missouri:

“Praise the Lord! We can now receive Pastor Kevin on Thursday on Dish 262!” (Yes, the boss is now dishin’ out grace and truth 5 days a week!—Ed.)

From California:

“I started out reading my Bible, but when I got to Leviticus I was like, ‘Whoa, this is too much!’...But then I started watching Les Feldick. He was way different, and I began to understand, and it all made sense. And now I’m watching your program—and now I get it! I really enjoy *Transformed by Grace*, and I watch it every day. I got another person to watch, too. It’s exciting! I wish people would just drop everything they think they know and just listen.”

From Oregon:

“A big thank you to Pastor Ricky Kurth for all the help you have been giving me over the last few months with my written studies. Moreover, I have finally started to listen to your... what to do if you are a ‘Stranded Grace Believer’ message. So, again, thanks. I’m stranded in Lebanon.”

From California:

“What a great answer, using Scripture on Scripture! Thank you so much. It’s so wonderful that when a question arises with us, we can always count on you guys at BBS to help us understand Scripture, and rightly divide the Word.”

From Illinois:

“Thanks for the info! Even though I have been reading and listening to your material...for the past couple of years, so much of this thought pattern is new to me. I used to read all the NT books and try to make sense of many confusing passages. The dispensational method has helped greatly. I appreciate your patience with my questions.” (As Pastor Paul Sadler used to say, “That’s what we’re here for!”—Ed.)

From North Carolina:

“This [Galatians 1:8,9 *Two Minutes*] is a most superlative explanation! I have tried explaining this to people but could not be as eloquent as you. THANK YOU. Now, with your permission, I am going to quote you.”

From Colorado:

"Very good. ["Was James Under the Curse of Galatians 1:8,9?"] The question threw me for I hadn't ever considered it. I believe the answer was spot on."

From our Inbox:

"This *Two Minutes* ["Son-in-law To Father-in-law"] is awesome. Especially as I reflect upon the antagonistic relationship between my husband and my dad. Mentorship and holy boldness are so important. My faith is the legacy of many in my youth and more recent past. Thank you for this wonderful testimony, Pastor Fredericksen."

From Missouri:

"Thank you for all you do for guys like me. I'm on your website every day, and I love everything there. I always come away blessed."

From Germany:

"I really enjoy your website! I want to ask if I could translate some of your *Two Minutes With the Bible* studies into the German language? In Germany there are very few grace believers. We have a Facebook group with 300 people. We could share some articles to make it available for the German people." (Permission granted, see page 30!—Ed.)

From Arkansas:

"I just finished reading your article in the October *Searchlight* on 'A Preview of 1 Thessalonians 4.' What a great explanation of that chapter and chapter 5 with its 'small superscript letters and numbers.' This will be an excellent Study Bible when it is finished. I can't wait till they come out to get mine."

From YouTube:

"Thank you Pastor Kevin. If my memory serves me right, I had the chance to meet and talk to you personally during your visit in IGBI Ozamis, way back 2003 or 2004 I'm not sure of the date. I was a Bible school student at that time. I am one of those who received your printed monthly magazine *Berean Searchlight* back then. Praise the Lord for this endeavor."

From Wyoming:

"I have tried so hard to bring my family to this blessed truth, only to have them refuse it and keep it at arm's length. It is truly jaw-dropping and frustrating to say the least. I'm going to insist they read Paul Sadler's *Exploring the Unsearchable Riches of Christ* with a Berean mind, verifying it in the Scriptures for themselves, but I'm not going to hold my breath."

From Florida:

"I especially enjoy Pastor Kevin's writings, for they align with his father's and Pastor Stam's." (Those men left us quite a legacy!—Ed.)

From Australia:

"Both my parents are dying...Mum has...rejected Christ. I have prayed she would accept Christ, but she has always said my doctrine is twisted, so I prayed how to reach her. Then the *Searchlight* came and as I shared the Scriptures about Christ, she started crying. I gave her the *Searchlight* with the Spurgeon quote on the back with the 'Do not enter eternity without Christ' sign. From the bottom of my heart I thank you." (We received another email that her mother trusted Christ as her Savior!—Pastor Kevin.)



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the Searchlight shining!**

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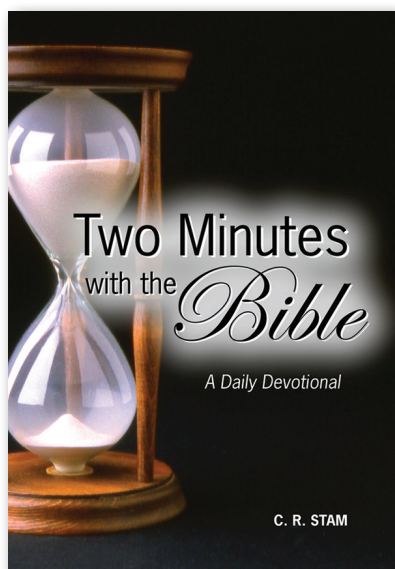
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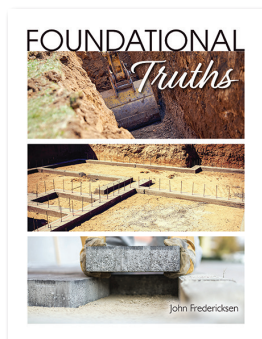
Foundational Reading

for the **New Year**



Every Christian should know that the foundation of “the church, which is His Body” wasn’t laid at Pentecost, and that the only hope of growing in God’s grace is to build on the foundation laid by the Apostle Paul.

Foundational Truths



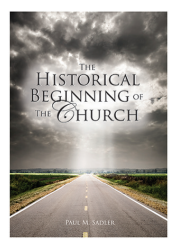
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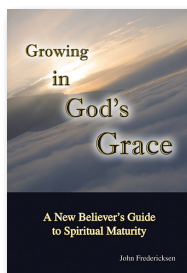
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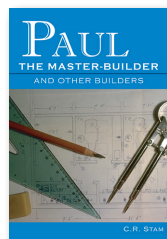
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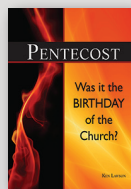
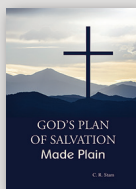
Fellowship File: We recently heard from a lady asking if we knew of any grace believers who lived near her. We explained that BBS founder Pastor C. R. Stam taught us to protect the privacy of our readers, so we don't give out the names of our readers. But we were happy to add that 50 years ago, we began a fellowship file of grace folk who give us their *permission* to give out their names. If you'd like to check to see if anyone who lives in your neck of the woods is in the file, and add *your* name to it, write us to the attention of Pastor Jim Tollar. Grace churches have sprouted from some of these contacts, and who knows, one just might grow from one of your contacts as well.

Wyoming Home Church: Jim and Carol Ingram host a grace Bible study in Clark, near Cody and Powell. Every Sunday from 10 till noon they watch videos of Pastor Kevin using the BBS streaming channel, followed by a question and answer session, and then enjoy fellowship around a finger food brunch. Jim says that dress is western casual, but cowboy boots and hats are not required! Drop-ins visiting Yellowstone Park are welcome, and can find the church by giving Jim a call at (307) 645-3099, or by asking their phones to direct them to 112 Road 8VE, Clark, Wyoming.

New Jersey Home Church: John Hunsbedt hasn't yet graduated from *St. Louis Theological Seminary*, but he's not going to let that stop him from establishing a church in his home in Princeton. He'll need your help though, so email him at gonessimple@gmail.com if you like to study God's rightly divided Word. John is also studying messages by the late Dave Stewart, so his ministry may sound familiar if you've been blessed by Dave's teachings.

Online German Church: Christian Mueller recently contacted us to ask permission to translate some of our *Two Minutes With the Bible* devotionals into his native tongue of German, explaining that this would help him minister to a German Facebook group of 300 people. Why not contact Christian at chmgarten@yahoo.com to learn how to join in, or find the group on Facebook at *Gnade und Bibel. Das Wort der Wahrheit recht geteilt*. If your German is a little rusty, maybe starting a Facebook group with people who speak *your* native tongue would get more response than you might think. You'll never know unless you try.

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to find in a place where
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you could ever want.” -Michard Card



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