

The BEREAN SEARCHLIGHT

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2015



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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” (II Tim. 2:15), to energize the Christian life, and to encourage the local church.

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From the Editor to You

Dear Friends in Christ,

In 1883, the baseball team that would eventually be known as the Dodgers began playing ball in Brooklyn. When financial concerns forced them to move to Los Angeles in 1958, it was easy to think that things would never be the same. In their past lay a rich history of such storied players as Zack Wheat, Roy Campanella and Jackie Robinson. Who knew what the future might hold for them in their new location? Of course, this question was answered when the years that followed produced such iconic Dodger legends as Sandy Koufax, Don Drysdale, and Steve Garvey.

In 1968, the *Berean Bible Fellowship* was established to promote "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery." In 1969, they held their first Bible conference at the historic conference grounds in Cedar Lake, Indiana, a place they would call home for the next 46 years. Due to financial concerns, however, next year's conference will be held at the *Community Bible Church* in Tipp City, Ohio. Skyrocketing costs in Cedar Lake simply left BBF's board no choice but to relocate.

At first glance, it is easy to think that things will never be the same. In BBF's past lay such stalwarts of the faith as Cornelius R. Stam, Win Johnson, Floyd Baker, and many other men of God who never wavered in their determination to champion the cause of Paul's apostleship and message. For those of us who grew up attending the conference in Cedar Lake, the memories of the messages they brought and the fellowship we enjoyed will be difficult to leave behind.

But for those who may wonder what this new venue might hold for the future of BBF, it should be remembered that all that is really being left behind are some buildings. A new alliance of spiritual leaders has arisen to be the guardians of Paul's gospel and lead a new generation of grace believers in the all-important challenge of furthering the cause of the rightly divided Word. *Berean Bible Fellowship* is confident that this move will make the conference more affordable for God's people in these challenging financial times, resulting in a greater number of people coming to rejoice with us in the riches of God's grace.

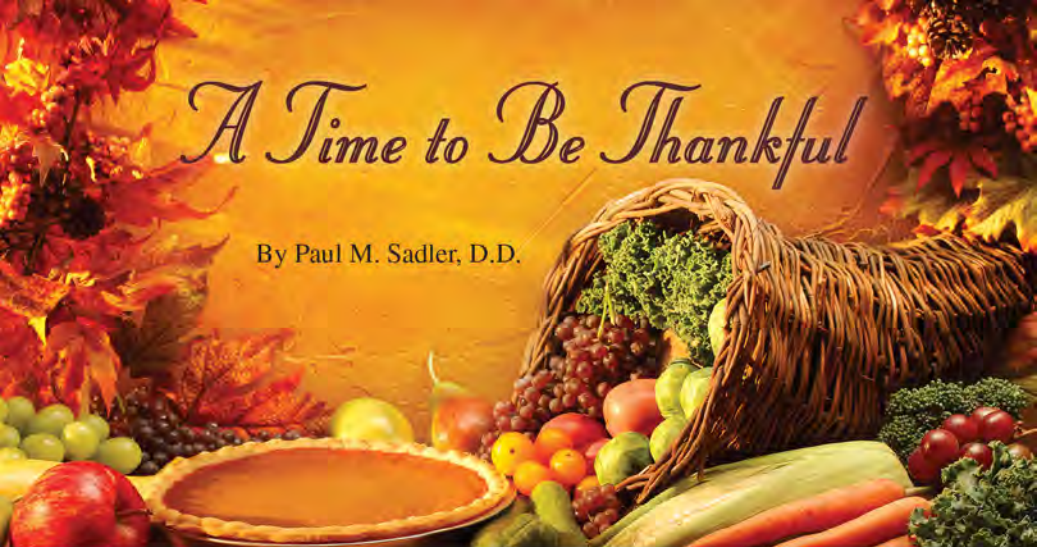
Details of BBF's 48th annual conference, to be held June 26-30, will be announced in subsequent issues of the *Searchlight*. For now, BBF's board feels like David in I Samuel 22:3 and just can't wait to see all that God will do for *Berean Bible Fellowship* in the years to come!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Ricky Kurth



A Time to Be Thankful

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.



Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year. I'm not sure whether it's the aroma of turkey and stuffing filling the house, or all the family congregating together at home. It's probably a little bit of both! The day begins at the crack of dawn with me helping my wife wrestle a big bird into the roaster. Of course, it wouldn't be Thanksgiving Day without a game of football in the backyard with the kids and grandkids. Fear not, I don't play anymore simply because I can't afford to have a 200-pound lineman fall on me at my age. At this point in my life it's a matter of survival! I'm more than happy to stand at a distance officiating the game.

Then the dinner bell rings, bringing an abrupt halt to all activities. After a season of prayer to thank our heavenly Father for His goodness and mercy that He has bestowed upon us, we gather around the table to enjoy an unforgettable meal. These are the things of which memories are made.

Sometimes it takes a day like *Thanksgiving* to cause us to be more mindful of those of like-precious faith and all the blessings we enjoy in Christ. Here we can learn a life-lesson from the Apostle Paul, who never seemed to lose sight of the importance of giving thanks in his daily walk with the Lord. He wrote to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Every time these dear saints came to mind, it brought joy to the apostle's heart. How he longed to see them again! Paul had truly been encouraged by their undying desire to receive the grace of God. He also rejoiced in the love they had for all the saints.

We, too, thank God upon every remembrance of *you*, for your desire to grow in grace. It is touching to see how God is working in and through you to carry out the counsel of His will. So as we gather around the Thanksgiving table this year, our family will be offering a special prayer of thanks for you, that your love will abound more and more in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God help each and every one of us to have the humility of the poor woman living in a shack, who said, "Thank God for the sun that shines through the cracks." We pray that as you gather with family and friends during this holiday that it will be a joyous *Thanksgiving* in the Lord, and may each and every day in Him be filled with thanksgiving!

A Profile in Courage

By Paul M. Sadler, D.D.



“A young boy complained to his father that most of the church hymns were boring to him—too far behind the times, tiresome tunes and meaningless words. His father put an end to his son’s complaints by saying, ‘If you think you can write better hymns, then why don’t you?’ The boy went to his room and did just that. The hymn that young Isaac Watts wrote that afternoon was, ‘*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*.’ That same evening the hymn was sung by the congregation and was received with great enthusiasm.”¹

Isaac’s father knew that complaining accomplished nothing, but action did. If you grumble about how long it takes for the women of the assembly to get a church dinner on the table, don’t get upset—get busy! Roll up your sleeves and assist them. If you are tempted to complain that no one said good morning to you at church, rather than leave in a huff, be a blessing to someone else and greet them. Many fail

to understand that complaining is a serious sin against God, as we will see in a moment.

THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

The Book of Judges covers about a 300-year period. The last verse of the book gives us a somber glimpse of that period: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). During the years between Joshua and the coronation of Saul as Israel’s first king, there were no kings in Israel. However, this doesn’t mean that God abandoned His chosen nation; quite the contrary. He raised up the Judges, one of whom was Gideon, to provide spiritual leadership for His people.

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel...” (Judges 6:1,2).

The reason God had given Israel over to the Midianites for seven years was that she had repeatedly broken the first and second commandments. They were worshipping a false god called Baal, which was strictly prohibited in the eyes of God. To add insult to injury, Israel had built an altar to Baal and worshipped in a grove of trees where they had placed an idol of this false god. In fact, Gideon's father, Joash, was one of the chief ones responsible for setting up the altar to Baal. This resulted in the chastisement of God in the form of oppression at the hand of the Midianites, who were ruthless. The Judges were normally raised up out of the tribe that suffered most from the oppression, and in this case, it was the tribe of Manasseh.

GIDEON, THE SIXTH JUDGE

Joash had named his son *Jerubbaal* (Judges 7:1). Gideon's name itself shows the spiritual condition of Israel at that time. To his credit, he was not a worshipper of Baal. In fact, he had a reputation of not doing so. He had destroyed the altar and cut down all the trees in the grove where the worshippers paid homage to Baal and Ashtaroth (Judges 2:13; 6:28). According to C. I. Scofield, the Book of Judges reveals that during that period significant things occurred.

1. Seven apostasies [a falling away]
2. Seven servitudes to seven heathen nations
3. Seven deliverances [one of which was from the Midianites]

When God called Gideon into His service, he was busy threshing wheat (Judges 6:11). He was working! From the very beginning God had created man to work; it gives him purpose and a sense of accomplishment in his life. The



Lord always called those who were busy working to eke out an existence. He passes by the idle and lazy when He needs men or women for His service. He raises up those who are already earning a living. Here are a few examples:

- David was busy attending to his father's sheep.
- Elisha was busy plowing with twelve yoke of oxen.
- Peter, James, and John were all busy mending their nets or fishing.

In the case of Gideon, he was *threshing wheat*, so he could provide for the needs of his family.

“And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites” (Judges 6:11).

The story of Gideon's life and times begins with Gideon hiding at the winepress, and it ends with the enemy being slain at the

winepress. Notice where Gideon was threshing his wheat, it was not at the threshing-floor, but *by the winepress*. He did so secretly for fear of the Midianites. If he were to be seen, they would have beaten him or worse, and then stolen his grain. Normally, threshing was done in an open area where the ground was hard and had plenty of cross-wind, or where oxen could be used to tread it. You needed a large open area to winnow wheat, but Gideon chose the winepress to accomplish his purpose where he would be inconspicuous. All of these circumstances reveal the extreme dread in which the people were living.

Historically, Midian was a mortal enemy of God's people. Midian means "strife," a fitting name for the people. You will recall that it was the Midianites who carried Joseph into Egypt where he endured years of bondage (Gen. 37:28). It was the Midianites and Moabites who tried to get Balaam to curse God's people (Num. 22-24). When that failed, they corrupted the Israelites by getting them to intermarry with the godless women of Moab.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12).

The angel of the LORD that appeared to Gideon was Jehovah. This particular title, *angel of the Lord*, is one of many titles of Christ in the Old Testament. With that said, from all outward appearances, Gideon seemed weak and fearful. He was essentially a scared farmer, but God was about to reveal to him that he was

actually a mighty man of valor. This, of course, was yet unknown to Gideon and his countrymen. You see, God sees what we fail to see in ourselves and others. Like Gideon, we are often our own worst enemy. Believers can talk themselves out of serving the Lord on the basis of feeling inadequate.

While Gideon saw himself as a disillusioned, timid soul, God saw him as a courageous man of action because he sought to bring in the wheat at any cost—even in the face of death! He was the least in his father's house, yet he had been standing against Baal for years. It's never easy to stand alone, but this was one of the main factors in God's choosing him.

GIDEON MAKES HIS CASE

"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (Judges 6:13).

Gideon reasoned before the Lord, why are all these things happening to us? Why, Lord, are you no longer with us as you were with our forefathers when you performed wonders in Egypt and miraculously parted the Red Sea? Actually, just the opposite was true, God had *not* abandoned them. He had always been with them, but He was *chastening* the chosen nation for its disobedience. The Lord had told her long ago that things would not go well for her if she disobeyed His commandments.

Gideon's circumstances obscured his view of God, which is often the case with believers even today. His complaint was a sin against God, but the Lord showed grace to him knowing that this young man had a sincere heart and a spirit of humility. "God is going to take Gideon from a place of discouragement and disappointment to a place of dependency on Him," a journey every believer has to experience at one time or another.

When the Lord told Gideon that He was going to send him to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites, his response was predictable, "Lord, surely you don't mean me!" Things haven't changed much! Believers today also have 101 reasons why someone else is far more qualified. Gideon's assessment of himself was that he was from Manasseh, one of the insignificant tribes at the time. It was not known for its nobility and loyalty like Judah. Furthermore, Gideon reminded the Lord, "I am the least in my father's house," unworthy even to be considered for such a task. "Lord, I'm nobody, poor, scared, inadequate, and living in despair."

In essence, the Lord says to him, "You're just the man for the job." You see, when we come to the end of ourselves, we become the clay that God can mold to do great things in His service. The Lord isn't looking for men and women who want recognition or glory. All the glory belongs solely to Him! The Lord encouraged Gideon that he would strike down the Midianites, "*as one man*" (v. 16). He would be with him every step of the way!

"And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me" (v. 17).

Bearing in mind that Israel was the sign people of God, God frequently spoke to her by way of miraculous manifestations. The Lord would grant Gideon three signs to embolden him.

First Sign—Judges 6:18-24

The first sign was in relation to the presentation of a gift, in the form of a meal that he prepared for the Lord. Gideon took a "kid" from the flock, without spot or blemish, and dressed it and placed the flesh in a basket. He then baked unleavened bread and made a pot of broth to pour over the meal. Afterwards he presented it to the angel of the Lord who was sitting beneath an oak tree (vv. 18,19).

The angel instructed Gideon to place the flesh and unleavened bread on a rock nearby. He then took the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and unleavened cakes. The moment that he did so, to Gideon's amazement, "there rose up a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes" (v. 21). It turned out to be a peace offering to the Lord (Lev. 3:1). The fire out of the rock that consumed the sacrifice was a sweet-smelling savor to God (Gen. 8:21). The sacrifice acknowledged that He would answer their prayers for deliverance from the hand of the Midianites.

When Gideon realized that he was in the presence of God, it exposed his utter sinfulness as it did for Job and Isaiah. He immediately built an altar there and called it Jehovah-Shalom. The

Hebrew word *shalom* or *peace* is much different than our usage of it today. We normally use the term in the context of ending hostilities between two parties or nations that they might live together in harmony. The Hebrew word *shalom* has the idea of rest and tranquility. We are to understand then that God gave Gideon a sense of peace about the promise of deliverance, thus removing his despair. He took great comfort in knowing that God would be with him.

Second Sign—Judges 6:37-40

The more Gideon thought about the enemy, who were like grasshoppers on the land, he had second thoughts. He was suddenly consumed with *doubt* whether he could defeat the Midianites and Amalekites. So Gideon made an unusual request of God, “Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said” (v. 37).

The fleece, of course, was a white woolen skin from a sheep. After Gideon put out the fleece, he retired for the evening. The first thing in the morning, he checked it, and sure enough, the dew was only on the fleece as he requested. But he was still plagued with doubt, something every believer has struggled with at one time or another. Gideon then asked God to reverse the order. The next morning, the fleece was dry, but the ground around it was wet with dew.

In my denominational days, the brethren would often say when they were trying to determine

God’s will that they were going to put out a fleece. In other words, they were looking for a sign from God. They would then set up a scenario to help the Lord. If God shows me where I misplaced my keys, then I’ll know it’s His will for me to get married. But putting out a fleece is not a biblical way of determining the will of God. Instead, it showed Gideon’s *lack of faith*.



While Gideon’s heart was in the right place, his flesh was striving against his spirit when he put the fleece out the second time. It revealed the weakness of his faith! Gideon should have trusted God and never made the request, but then to do so a second time was unacceptable. This shows that God is *longsuffering* with his servants, and understands our human frailties. The fleece and miracle that followed demonstrated that God is a God of miracles, just as Gideon had been told by his forbearers when God delivered His people from Egypt. God used the incidents with the fleece as a form of encouragement, but He wasn’t finished molding his servant into a *model of courage*.

Gideon’s Army—Judges 7:2-7

Gideon really didn’t question if it was God’s will to go into battle, as much as had His will changed

when so few men (32,000) showed up, not to mention the fact that they had no weapons. And there was obviously a declining morale among the troops! Since God did not want Israel to think that she conquered the enemy in her own strength, He instructed Gideon to thin out the ranks. Those who were timid and fearful were given the liberty to leave in accordance with the Law—two-thirds (22,000) of Gideon's army packed up and gladly left.

The fearful who went home are like many who are frightened by the enemy today. When the battle for sound doctrine grows intense, they are nowhere to be found. The moment they experience criticism, controversy or discouragement, they flee to a safe haven. However, we are often unaware that God is merely testing us. This was certainly true of the 10,000 who were left that came down to the water's edge. With the number of men still too great, God instructed Gideon to have them drink of the water. Those who took up the water in their hands and lapped the water like a dog were to be set apart. But others knelt to drink. These two ways of drinking clearly indicated a difference in the two groups of men. The 9,700 who knelt to drink from the stream until they were full, were plainly more self-indulgent. They were self-absorbed in drinking and personal comfort.

On the other hand, the 300 who lapped the water like a dog merely wanted to quench their thirst. They were alert—their eyes were open in the event of an ambush. These men could be depended upon to follow orders. They were

the cream of the crop, as they say. The test determined who was fit for the Lord's service. Those who failed the test, that minded earthly things like refreshment, were sent home.



We learn from this test that God doesn't need large numbers or eloquent leaders to accomplish His purpose. He needs those who are available and willing to serve. Men put a lot of stock in numbers, whether it is their number of conversions or the membership of their assembly. In the eyes of men, who are prone to self-glorification, there is power in great numbers. They believe that only a large group of believers can be used of the Lord effectively. But the Scriptures abound with examples to the contrary. God has always done His greatest work with remnants, the church in the house, and the little flocks to make His will known.

You see, God was more interested in the quality of His soldiers, not the quantity. These 300 men of resolve were ready to do battle with the enemy in spite of all the obstacles. They chose to have no confidence in themselves! Can the same be said of us? The lesson for us is that we have no strength or goodness of our own. Christ is

our strength! Once the 300 were chosen, their courage was about to be put to the test, along with Gideon's. The few were going up against such a great host that numbered 135,000. Humanly speaking, the odds of victory were 400 to 1. We learn from this that the battle is the Lord's in whatever age we live (I Sam. 17:47). His strength is made perfect in our weakness (II Cor. 12:9). As a result, when the battle is won, all the glory and honor goes to God, as we will witness in the story.

Third Sign—Judges 7:9-15

Prior to the battle, the Lord sent Gideon on a reconnaissance mission to reinforce his faith. We are told that the Midianites and the Amalekites were camped in a valley. Their number was so great that they looked like grasshoppers on the land (Judges 7:12). Under the cover of darkness, Gideon and his servant covertly made their way to one of the tents where they heard two men conversing with one another. One of the men told how he had a dream, saying,



“a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along” (v. 13). Gideon went to just the right tent at just the right time—it was according to the providence of God.

The “barley cake” symbolized the poverty of Israel, and her poor state spiritually. It speaks of weakness and humiliation—Gideon is the barley cake in the story! The “tent” speaks of the nomads’ freedom and strength to do as they willed, as witnessed when they ravaged the crops of Israel. The cake tumbling down the hill that destroyed the tent is a picture of Gideon’s small army utterly abolishing the enemy.

The interpretation of the dream by the man in the tent is telling. “This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon...a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian” (v. 14). When Gideon heard these words, there was no question in his mind that God was with him. God knows and understands the human need for validation. You see, faith is not a leap into the unknown; it is always based on substance and evidence found in God’s Word (Heb. 11:1).

The Battle—Judges 7:16-25

The Midianites were back in town again to plunder the harvest. They were like a plague on the land, destroying everything in their path. As Gideon prepared for battle, he divided his men into three companies. We usually picture this as a single line of men that formed a circle around the camp of the Midianites. But it is more likely that Gideon placed 100 soldiers at three different locations around the encampment, making it appear that a mighty army was about to descend.

The three weapons that Gideon placed in the hands of his men were a pitcher, a lamp, and a trumpet. Both hands were full!

The trumpet was in their right hand while the pitcher and lamp within was in their left hand. Once in position, at Gideon's command the 300 men blew the trumpets simultaneously and broke their pitchers allowing the light to shine forth. Then they shouted, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

Bearing in mind that the enemy was camped in a valley, the sound of 300 voices echoing through the valley made it sound like a mighty army was descending on them. The Midianites assumed that behind each trumpeter was a column of soldiers; it was a perfect providential, diversionary tactic. The result was a state of chaos in the camp of the Midianites as they ran one another through with their swords. Gideon's men needed not

fight, but only stand and watch the salvation of the Lord!

Gideon's sword was at his side, it was the Sword of God's Word, which is sharper and more powerful than any two-edged sword that won the battle (Heb. 4:12). A great victory was wrought in Israel that day to the glory of God. Interestingly, the story of Gideon began at the winepress, and it ends at the winepress where the prince of the Midianites, Zeeb, was slain.

So we learn a simple lesson from this profile in courage that weakness, helplessness, and nothingness in Christ's hand will win the day—God's strength is made perfect in our weakness and inability. 

Endnote

1. Author unknown.

Question Box

"Does Acts 13:48 teach that God chooses who will be saved?"

"...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Like all verses, Acts 13:48 has a context which alone can be trusted to interpret the meaning of the verse. In the immediate context here, Paul had preached the gospel of grace to the Jews in Antioch (vv. 14-41), the ones who were *originally* ordained to eternal life under the kingdom program. Then, "when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them" (v. 42), so Paul preached the gospel to them (v. 44). The unbelieving Jews resisted his efforts to minister to the Gentiles (v. 45), but "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (v. 48), *and this now included Gentiles as well as Jews* under God's grace program.

—Pastor Kurth

The POWER of the Holy Boast



By Pastor Ricky Kurth

Did you hear about the woman who said to her friend, “I don’t mean to brag, but I can still fit into the earrings I wore in high school”? If not, perhaps you heard about the man who said to a co-worker, “I don’t mean to brag, but my bank just sent me an email telling me that I am *outstanding*.” Then there was the woman who said to her neighbor, “I don’t mean to brag, but I just finished my 14-day diet in just 3 hours and 38 minutes!” I think we can all relate to that one!

This brings up an interesting question: is it okay to boast about yourself and your abilities and accomplishments? You wouldn’t think so. After all, doesn’t the Bible say, “Let another man praise thee, *and not thine own mouth*” (Prov. 27:2)? But you should know that there are exceptions to this rule. Remember when Goliath was taunting the armies of Israel? What did David say to Saul to get the King to let him fight this mighty adversary of God’s people?

“And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb...and...thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them...” (I Sam. 17:34-36).

That certainly sounds like boasting to me! But if you know your Bible, you know David wasn’t boasting about himself. He was boasting about *the Lord*, and what he knew God could do through him (I Sam. 17:46). David knew he’d slay that bad boy because *the Lord God fought for Israel* (Josh. 10:14)!

This explains why the Apostle Paul likewise engaged in some boasting (II Cor. 11:5). Imagine comparing yourself to the Lord’s hand-picked apostles! But like David, he too was only boasting, as

he said, “of our authority, *which the Lord hath given us*” (II Cor. 10:8). Thus we know that when he told the Ephesian elders that “the gospel of the grace of God” which he preached was “able to build you up” (Acts 20:24,32), he was not engaging in any *personal* boasting, but was rather boasting about “*the power which the Lord hath given me to edification*” (II Cor. 13:10). Like David, Paul wasn’t bragging about himself, he was actually boasting about the Lord, and the powerful message He had given him.

All of this begs the question, “Is there any boasting in which you and I can engage?” Well, did you ever tell someone that you are *sure* you are going to heaven and have them respond, “You certainly think a lot of yourself!” When that happens, be sure to reply, “Just the opposite! I think a lot of *my Savior*, who died to pay for all my sins.” As you know, in proclaiming our assurance of salvation, we are not bragging of any *personal* worthiness to attain heaven’s glory, we are boasting about what the Lord has done for us.

But what about boasting about *other* people and their abilities and accomplishments? This too would appear to be Scripturally acceptable. Didn’t Solomon say, “*Let another man praise thee*” (Prov. 27:2)? If boasting about others was *not* acceptable in the sight of God, the verse would rather have said, “*don’t let another man praise thee.*” With that in mind, it is not surprising to find the apostle Paul bragging on the Corinthians:

“...I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many” (II Cor. 9:2).

You wouldn’t think that there was anything about the carnal Corinthians worth boasting about, but when Paul began to take up a collection “for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26), the Corinthians had promised to make such a large contribution that the apostle boasted about them to the Macedonians. When the Macedonians heard it, the zeal of the saints at Corinth “provoked very many” in Macedonia to give as well.

Of course, to say that the zeal of the Corinthians provoked the Macedonians to give was an understatement. These precious saints responded to Paul’s boast with such unfathomable generosity that he was moved to boast about *them* back to the Corinthians!

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

“For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

“Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift...” (II Cor. 8:1-4).

Evidently when the Macedonians heard about what a large gift the Corinthians had pledged to give, they were moved to give so deeply beyond their power to give that it was all they could do to persuade Paul to accept it.



Here we have to pause and ask: Is that a good motive to give to the Lord's work? If you hear that a brother or sister in Christ gave a large contribution to the ministry, is that a good reason for you to decide to make a large donation without regard to whether or not you can afford it? Didn't Paul say in this very same epistle to the Corinthians that "the love of Christ constraineth us" to serve Him (II Cor. 5:14)? That certainly seems to be the

only proper motivation to serve the Lord by giving of our finances to His work. So why would Paul try to provoke the Macedonians to give by boasting about the liberality of the Corinthians?

Well, perhaps you noticed that Paul didn't *say* that he boasted about the Corinthians in order to provoke the Macedonians to give, he simply boasted about their gift, and the Macedonians gave beyond their power in response. Paul firmly believed that God's people should be moved to give when constrained by the love that Christ showed when He loved us and gave Himself for us. So in boasting about the Corinthians to the Macedonians, I believe *he was actually boasting about the Lord*, about the effect that His love had on them, hoping that the Corinthian response to the love of Christ would constrain the Macedonians to desire to emulate their grace, which it did *in spades*.

This in turn explains why Paul went on to boast about *the Macedonians to the Corinthians*, as we have seen (II Cor. 8:1-5). On the surface, it appears that Paul was attempting to *shame* the Corinthians into giving the large contribution that they had pledged to give the year before (II Cor. 9:2) by telling them about how the impoverished Macedonians had given so liberally, and then adding,

"Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also" (II Cor. 8:6).

But is *that* a good reason to serve the Lord by giving to the ministry, *shame*? Embarrassment? The *humiliation* that the wealthy Corinthians no doubt felt when they compared themselves to those poor saints who gave so liberally? What happened to being constrained by the love of Christ? Well, believe it or not, I believe this is what Paul had in mind in singing the praises of the Macedonians to the stingy Corinthians. You see, it is not a natural thing for the deep poverty of a congregation to abound to the riches of their liberality. The only thing

that could trigger this kind of response is a deep appreciation for the love of Christ, and it was *this* that Paul was trying to call to the attention of the Corinthians. We know this because the apostle went on to exhort them to “prove the sincerity of your love” (II Cor. 8:8), adding,

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (v. 9).

So it only *looked* like Paul was trying to shame the Corinthians into coughing up the gift that they had promised a year earlier, when in reality he was directing their attention to what *the grace of God* was doing in Macedonia

(II Cor. 8:1), hoping that the love of Christ would constrain the saints in Corinth to respond to God’s grace with the same amazing spirit of enthusiasm.

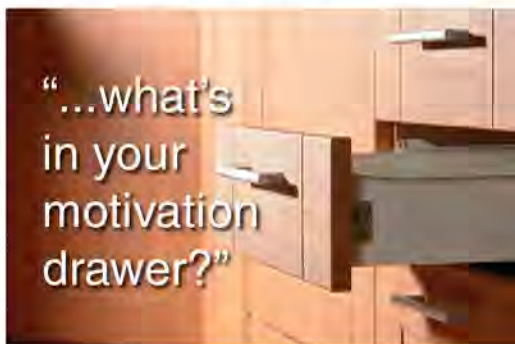
The bottom line is that while many preachers today brag about the giving of some believers in order to goad others to give on the basis of shame or envy, there is no justification in God’s Word for such unholy boasting. The only basis for glorying in which our beloved apostle ever engaged was the one that extolled the virtues of the love of Christ and the grace of God, and how these virtues were effectually working in the lives of God’s people. God had *forbidden* him to glory in anything except the cross which demonstrated His great love (Gal. 6:14), and Paul took that prohibition very seriously, as should we.

We close with one more example of holy boasting. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

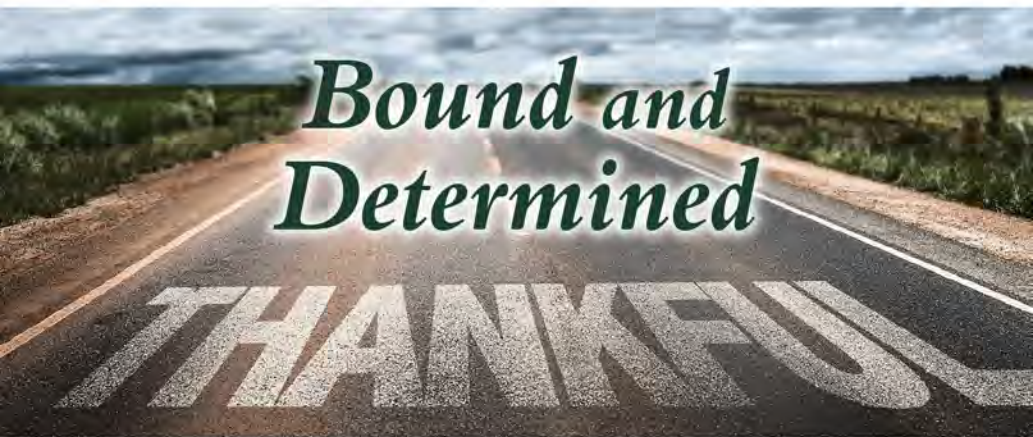
“...we ourselves *glory in you* in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (II Thes. 1:4).

Here again, Paul was not glorying about the Thessalonians themselves, but rather on what God was doing in and through them. Beloved, it is not a natural thing for faith to grow (v. 3) in the midst of persecutions and tribulations; it is natural for faith to be *shaken* at such times. If this wasn’t so, Paul would not have had to write and tell these same Thessalonians “that no man should be moved by these afflictions” (I Thes. 3:3). When the faith of these dear saints *grew* instead of being shaken, it prompted the apostle to “glory” or *boast* about them “in the churches” to whom he ministered, hoping to bolster the flagging faith of all who were undergoing similar persecutions.

At the risk of sounding like a Capital One commercial, what’s in your motivation drawer? If you are contributing to the Lord’s work



for the praise of men, you already have your reward (Matt. 6:1,2). Don't let spiritual leaders goad you into giving beyond what you can afford to give! If you are being motivated to give to try to keep up with what others are giving, you are forgetting about the greatest Giver of all, the One who "loved the church, and gave *Himself* for it" (Eph. 5:25). "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15)! Holy boasting about this constraining love is the only thing that has the power to move God's people to give to His work with a motive of which He can approve. Has it moved you? At the Judgment Seat of Christ, your motive in serving the Lord will be made manifest (I Cor. 4:5). Make sure you don't suffer a loss of reward in that day for failing to give in accord with the foundation of grace laid by the Apostle Paul (3:10-15). 



Bound and Determined

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith growth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (II Thes. 1:3).

Did you ever notice that in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul didn't just say, "We thank God always for you," he wrote, "We are *bound* to thank God always for you." The word *bound* means "under legal or moral obligation." Our *King James Version* translators elsewhere translated the Greek word for *bound* as "debtor" or "owe." Paul felt that he owed a moral debt to God to thank Him that the faith and love of the Thessalonians had grown. Why might that be?

If you are familiar with Paul's *first* epistle to these brethren, you know the answer! Paul had *prayed* that their faith and love might grow (I Thes. 3:10-12)! In fact, he prayed "exceedingly" for this and their faith had grown "exceedingly"! No wonder he felt *bound* to give thanks for them "as it is meet." The word *meet* means "appropriate" or "fitting." Beloved, when God answers our prayers, it is not meet to forget to thank Him! Let's all be bound and determined to do what is meet.

—Pastor Ricky Kurth



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Unbelief in the Life of the Believer

By Patrick D. Kilgo



Pat and his wife Michelle are missionaries in Southeast Asia with *Things To Come Mission*.

Bill Murray, the well-known actor and comedian, once approached a woman seated in a restaurant. As recognition flashed across her face, he took some of her French fries, ate them, and told her, "No one will ever believe you."

I wonder sometimes if God feels the same way concerning His saints! While the word *unbelief* usually draws our minds to those who haven't trusted Christ for their salvation, the Bible mentions *unbelief* far more frequently in reference to *believers* than to the lost. While it may seem paradoxical, it is true; unbelief is a huge problem in the lives of believers. It stifles their walk and leaves them unprofitable to God. These unbelieving believers trust Christ with their eternity, but have no confidence in Him in the present. God is an absent passenger to them, banished as a troublesome outsider who cannot impact their

lives in any meaningful way. This kind of unbelief is seldom addressed in our churches, but understanding it is vitally important to our spiritual well-being.

Faith and Unbelief on a Spectrum

What does God want from you? It's simple, He wants you to believe Him. Most references to *believing* in the Bible concern salvation (Rom. 1:16; 3:21-22, etc.). However, we are supposed to believe everything in the Bible, not just salvation doctrine. Paul believed "all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). The majority of Paul's teachings focus on our conduct, not salvation. As we learn God's instructions, believe them, and work them out in our lives, our faith will be strengthened.

Most people incorrectly think you either have faith or you don't,

but faith is a “substance” (Heb. 11:1). A *substance* takes up space and can be measured on a continuum, like water in a cup. Faith, like a cup of water, can have any level between empty and full. The Bible refers to those with no faith (Mark 4:40), a little faith (Luke 12:27-28), a lot of faith (Rom. 4:19-20) and full faith (Acts 6:5-8). Faith can be added to (Luke 17:5) and subtracted from (2 Tim. 2:18).

Here’s how 19th century evangelist Charles Finney defined unbelief: **“Unbelief is the opposite of [faith]. It is a withholding of confidence from what God says; it is distrust; it is a refusal to commit or give up the mind to the influence of a truth or promise; it is a rejection of evidence. For example; take any of the facts recorded in the Bible. Unbelief, is a refusal to credit their truthfulness, or to allow them that influence which they deserve.”**¹

Thus, faith and unbelief complement one another. A little faith means a lot of unbelief, just as a lot of faith portends a little unbelief. We should move forward daily in faith as the Spirit sanctifies us through His truth (John 17:17). Someone struggling in unbelief is moving backwards, or *backsliding* (Jer. 8:5). Of course, after a backslide a person can advance again (or *rebound*) if they respond in faith to what they know and not what they see (2 Cor. 5:7).

The source of unbelief is familiar to every human: *self-love*. We naturally have plenty of confidence in ourselves, but very little in God. The attitude behind unbelief is always: “My way is better than God’s.” Disobedience and the

failure to properly acknowledge God symbolize this self-elevation and self-love of one’s own thinking.

Unbelief and Hardness of Heart

Continual backsliding and rebounding produces *hardness of heart*. Hardness of heart and unbelief are associated but not the same. Unbelief describes a lack in one’s faith, while hardness of heart concerns one’s *inclination towards rebounding*. The harder the heart, the less inclined a believer is to rebound in faith.

Hardness of heart is rooted in *repetition*—repeated backslidings and rebounds, or repeated unwillingness to address sin issues at all. The backsliding-rebounding cycle and the conscious ignoring of God both take a spiritual toll and produce a hardened indifference to our spiritual nature, the essence of who we are in Christ. The longer one acts in unbelief, the harder the heart becomes, and the less inclined one is towards spiritual things. Thus, someone with advanced hardness of heart tends to have very little faith and is disinclined to ever humbly rebound towards spiritual things.

These truths are exhibited in Israel’s history time and again. Israel’s great sin was idolatry, characterized by a repetitive back-and-forth allegiance between the One True God and false gods. All God ever wanted was the heart of the people of Israel, for them to be His people and Him to be their God (Jer. 31:33). But, you can see their hardness developing sequentially as periods of backsliding into idolatry get longer and periods of revival toward God get shorter.

Finally God allowed His people, now two divided nations, to be taken captive because of idolatry (2 Kings 17:7-23). In the gospel accounts, Israel's extreme hardness is manifest and the miraculous evidences that Christ provided were mostly rejected (Matt. 13:54-58 cf. Mark 6:6; 3:1-6), so Israel couldn't see Christ for who He was (John 12:37-40).

"Dispensations may change but people don't!"

Even the disciples, who were believers, struggled mightily in unbelief and hardness of heart. One of many such examples revolved around Jesus' feeding of the five thousand. Jesus miraculously *created matter*, producing massive amounts of fish and bread for a huge crowd (Mark 6:35-44). Immediately afterward came another well-known miracle—Jesus walked on water! But do you know *why* He walked on water? It was because his disciples "considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52). These men were saved, but they had *repeatedly* (there's our word again) seen Christ's miracles and the novelty was gone, replaced by a hardened indifference. All because they didn't believe *everything* revealed to them. Later they remained in unbelief concerning his death (Matt. 16:21-23) and resurrection (Mark 16:14) as well.

If you think those examples of unbelief are shocking, it gets worse! Immediately before Jesus

gave his Great Commission—just moments before His ascension—the last three words recorded concerning the disciples were, "but some doubted" (Matt. 28:17). These disciples had seen the risen Christ and had interacted with Him for forty days. Yet, as He is about to ascend, a few of the twelve still suffered from unbelief. At some point believers cannot see the evidences of faith right in front of them because of unbelief and hardness of heart.

Another interesting biblical principle is this: *Advanced hardness of heart creates a conscious regret in the believer*. The hardened believer knows what he once had when he walked in faith and he misses it! The first time I taught this lesson, a saint in his eighties approached me and said, "I was saved in my twenties and I was on fire for the Lord! But then my life got busy and I floated along, never fully committing to Him. I struggled with the same sin issues, back and forth. I have known for years that I can never get back to that faith I had at the beginning. It's just not possible." His statement illustrates the repetition that causes hardness, the conscious regret that hardened people feel, and the hopeless feeling of being stuck in unbelief. But this man was wrong about one thing: There is hope!

Unbelief Under Grace

Dispensations may change but people don't! The human heart is the same today as it was five minutes after Adam fell, and we are just as susceptible to unbelief as Christ's disciples or anyone else in any other dispensation. Praise

the Lord that a believer's unbelief today will not unseat him from his heavenly hope; his position in Christ is absolutely secure.

Paul's epistles don't directly address unbelief among believers, at least not in those terms. Rather, Paul sets forth a new paradigm whereby our acceptance of grace and our attitude toward sin is a barometer of our unbelief. Our salvation is given to us free of charge by believing in Christ's atoning sacrifice of Himself on our behalf. In return, we are asked to live a life of faith that honors what He did for us (Rom. 12:1). We are to obey God by believing the Body-specific instructions—all of them—given through Paul's epistles. Yes, there will be failings, but as we let the Word work through us, our faith will consistently move forward, and we can avoid the pitfalls of unbelief.

There is a danger when we consciously neglect Paul's teachings, or put off our adherence to them. For instance, we are told that "to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6). When a believer struggles in carnality, he shows that he does not really believe this teaching. What he really believes is that carnal things will satisfy him more than spiritual things. Such a prideful stance will push a believer further into unbelief, and place him in jeopardy of a hardened heart if the attitude is left uncorrected. On the other hand, when we walk by faith and not by sight, when we believe that God's way is better than our way, He reciprocates that faith by offering us even more evidence of His trustworthiness, and a renewed sense of His purpose and presence.

This will set us down the path to defeating unbelief!

Are You Mired in Unbelief?

So you've trusted Christ with your eternal destination. Great! But have you trusted Christ with your present life here on Earth? Unfortunately, most Christians, especially American Christians, have not. We are too self-sufficient, too independent, and too wrapped up in materialism to lean on the Lord for His support. For most of us, our belief system is a mixture between "the gospel, a Protestant work ethic, and the American Dream"² and not the gospel alone.

It is important to examine yourself with respect to your unbelief and not just study this biblical issue academically. The questions below are designed to help you gauge your degree of unbelief so you can get back on the "right-ward" track toward a life of faith. Each question is based on some biblical principle concerning unbelief:

- Are you believing everything He says to you in the rightly divided Word?
- Are you giving Him, and Him alone, the credit for prospering you (1 Cor. 16:2)?
- Are you relying on Him for anything in your life? Anything at all?
- Have you sacrificed anything for Him lately, trusting Him to take care of you? Your time? Your money? Your resources? Your reputation?
- Have you made any changes in your life recently based on something you've learned from the Scriptures?

- What does your spiritual life look like today compared to a year ago?
- How quickly do you respond to sin issues in your life? Do you have a long, ongoing pattern of backsliding and rebounding with a specific sin issue?
- Have you suffered any persecution for the cause of Christ?
- When was the last time you boldly asked God to use you for something big?
- Are you sharing Christ with others?
- What is your prayer life like? Do you find it strained and forced? Is it infrequent? Repetitive? Empty?
- Are you mad at me for pointing all of this out?

Overcoming Unbelief

Any time we struggle with unbelief and experience its consequences, God considers us “conformed to this world.” But the Bible has a solution—renewing your mind (Rom. 12:2). For a person to renew his mind, Paul writes in the very next verse, he must “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom. 12:3). Thus, overcoming unbelief and hardness of heart starts with *humbling* one’s self and making a hard, self-confrontational comparison between our thinking and God’s thinking as revealed in His Holy Word.

There is an old saying: “The same sun that hardens clay melts wax.” Does clay absorb different kinds of sun rays than wax? Of course not, the rays are the same! It is the internal makeup of the clay and wax that governs how it responds to the sun’s rays. Like

the sun, the same holy, pure and righteous God has shown Himself to us. How we react to His goodness—whether we harden like clay or melt like wax—depends on our own personal level of humility.



Are we willing, like David, to say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23-24). Or, like the citizens in one of Christ’s parables, will we say, “We will not have this man to reign over us!” (Luke 19:11-27)? Unfortunately, while reclaiming God’s joy and purpose is still possible for hardened believers, most will not humble themselves and believe by faith. It’s not that they *cannot* believe; it is certainly possible. But advanced hardness of heart produces such a callousness to God, and such a false sense of self-worth, that they most often *will not* choose to respond in faith.

However, the Bible tells us how to renew our spiritual mind. As Paul says elsewhere, the new man is “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10). In other words, you renew your mind by washing it

with His Word (Eph. 5:26)! In addition, there are ways to maximize this renewal process. The “putting off” of bad practices by “putting on” good practices is a great way to begin walking in faith again (Eph. 4:21-32 cf. Psa. 119:100). My



personal favorite way to heighten the process of being renewed in the knowledge of Him is to be out in nature, to look around at all the things God created, to touch trees, swim in rivers, walk barefoot in His soil, and then stand humbled that such a Creator would bother with an imperfect sinner like me! As even an old scoutmaster once told me, “A lot of stuff gets worked out in the woods.”

After renewing your mind with an awareness of God’s Person, try these practical ways to combat unbelief: 1) Write down anything fruitful that happened to you recently, including any trials that caused growth, and give God the credit for it, both in prayer and when talking to others. 2) Make a service sacrifice of some sort, something pleasing to the Lord *that will really cost you*. It could involve your finances, but consider giving up your time, or even your reputation in the eyes of the world, and rely on the Lord to fill the gap. I recently heard the testimony of a businessman who reduced

his working hours to 30 hours a week—a weekly sacrifice of just 10 hours—to serve the people in his church. His life was far more enriched by the joy he gained from serving than from what the extra income could provide, and he testified that his faith had grown. 3) Boldly ask God to do something big with your life, something where He alone will receive the credit, something that might even result in some persecution. This might include starting a ministry, or learning a foreign language to reach out to a local group of foreign nationals with the gospel, or any other big thing that you think He can’t do through you.

These sample tips have one thing in common—they demand that you pair *work* with your faith (Eph. 2:10). Practically speaking, nothing builds faith faster than working out the faith you already possess. Just as God’s grace is present in every aspect of the believer’s life, it is also present in recovery from unbelief. Though it may have taken years to catapult yourself into hardness and unbelief, you might be surprised at how quickly a person who yields to the Spirit can overcome it with God’s grace. Follow the lead of the concerned father of a demon-possessed child who, when told that “all things are possible to him that believeth,” simply replied, “Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:23-24). 

Endnotes

1. Finney, Charles. “Unbelief.” *The Oberlin Evangelist* Lecture XII August 1843, pg. 2, web
2. <http://www.infoforfamilies.com/blog/2013/11/13/how-to-raise-a-pagan-kid-in-a-christian-home>

Have You Ever Felt Like the Lone Ranger?



By Pastor John Fredericksen

I was a senior in high school when I heard, or at least understood, the gospel for the first time. But my salvation was very real. God's grace not only changed my eternal destiny, it changed my desire to now do right, totally embrace every truth in Scripture, and have a burden to see others saved. But the truth is that as I attended a secular high school, I often felt like the Lone Ranger, or the only real Christian in a host of hostile lost people. One experience epitomized such a feeling. In a class discussion about evolution, I was the only one in the room who believed in and stood up for biblical creation as explained in the Bible. I was of course, ridiculed by student and teacher alike. In that, and other instances, I was the Lone Ranger.

If you've ever felt like you were the Lone Ranger too, you and I are not alone. In Psalm 12:1, David writes, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." In verses 2 through 4, he goes on to describe the ungodly speaking words of "vanity" with an arrogance that believed they would always prevail without consequence. Chapter 14 goes on to explain there were many who were fools who, in their hearts, said "there is no God" (14:1). It seemed to David, when God "looked down from heaven... to see if there were any that did...seek God," the conclusion was, "They are all gone aside...there is none that doeth good, no not one" (14:2-3). It was enough for even a godly man like David to get discouraged.

How was David to get through these conditions without succumbing to utter defeat? There is a simple threefold answer. In the midst of David's despair over the seeming absence of godly men, he continued to look into the "pure words" of Scripture for comfort and strength (Psalm 12:6-7). All of Psalm 73 describes David's struggle with envy over the wicked who prospered. But then he remembered that the end of the wicked would eventually be divine judgment "in a moment." Finally, David realized, "...in Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11). These simple but profound truths comforted and strengthened David and remembering them can do the same for you.

The next time you get discouraged by the overwhelming ungodliness of our day, remember these things that enabled David to continue on the right path.



BBS Letter Excerpts

From Pennsylvania:

"It was over 30 years ago when I cried out to God to understand how to be righteous and holy before Him. He answered that prayer through the writings of Pastor Stam. In the years that followed, BBS has been among numerous faithful preachers of the Word that have encouraged me to seek to know God and serve Him better through every difficulty of life."

From New Jersey:

"I came to what I now know to be mid-Acts dispensationalism while doing a study of Acts. I was reading Acts 2, and it just occurred to me (prompted by the Holy Spirit, no doubt) that Peter doesn't preach about Jesus' blood washing away our sins... I started googling the concept, and it eventually led me to a name: Stam... One more step in my journey to BBS and consistent dispensationalism was picking up a copy of *Acts, Dispensationally Considered*. Mind blown!"

From Tennessee:

"I am the owner of a Christian bookstore and have been studying right division for about eight years now and am very interested in carrying a full line of your products. Could you send me a wholesale product listing?"

From the Inbox:

"I really enjoy the *Searchlight* and your writings, Pastor Sadler, not only in their substance, but also the form. They are edifying and encouraging!"

From our Inbox:

"I feel that I'm just beginning to understand the Word rightly divided and there's nothing that blesses my heart more than learning what God's Word has to say about things... Years of unanswered questions and religious positions that could not be defended left me almost at the end of my rope. Thank God for you guys that help me and others to see the answers."

From Georgia:

"*Now That I Believe* has been a great help to me, and I usually read it every few weeks to keep me on track. I never knew about grace until I came across BBS and so it has opened my eyes to a lot, but I'm still in need of guidance and correction."

From Facebook:

"This is one of the best written *Two Minutes* I have read ('Important Contrasts in the Bible,' by John Fredericksen)."

From our Inbox:

"I have been in church for many years but only began to study the Word rightly divided a few years ago. I have been asked to teach a time or two in the last few months, but I have no experience nor have I ever had any training in the area of teaching. I'm not sure that teaching is something I can do but would be interested in any materials you could direct me to that may help." (God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called [I Cor. 1:26-29].—Ed).

From Georgia:

"Mr. Stam's commentary on the Book of Acts is excellent. I am very much looking forward to reading his commentary on Romans and Thesalonians."

From Florida:

"I teach regularly and run a teen ministry at the church...I really enjoyed your series on getting involved in the ministry and the heartaches and difficulties that will be faced out of II Corinthians. I think every person considering the ministry should study through those articles ['The Measure of the Ministry']."

From Arizona:

"For the past five years I have been studying God's rightly divided Word through Pastor Stam, Pastor Sadler, and Pastor Kurth...in my heart I believe God is calling me to the ministry."

From Oklahoma:

"It was through you all's radio program in Oklahoma City (KQCU) that I came to see the Mystery...that was in 1978, and my heart still rejoices in His matchless grace...my support of BBS has not nearly equaled you all's faithfulness to me..."

From our Inbox:

"I appreciate you taking time, Pastor Sadler, to reply to my request for clarification on where the Body of Christ will dwell for eternity."

From Michigan:

"We want to thank you for the messages you preached at the Bitely conference...Thank you for taking the time to speak to us, answer questions, and share with us."

From Guam:

"When I leave this island in the Rapture, or as a witness for Christ, this whole island will have no excuse for rejecting the all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ." (That's the spirit!—Ed).

From our Inbox:

"Thank you for your response. This is fascinating information. I would also like to say that your audio sermons, and the others available from the BBS site, have been a great blessing to me and my faith."

From Tennessee:

"I am so excited, I gave a copy of the February *Searchlight* to a member of the Bible study I was in and asked her if she would like to receive it. She said yes. Last week she returned my copy and told me how excited she and her husband were with all they are learning...I am new to the area and it thrills me to have such a publication to hand out."

From the Philippines:

"I am so blessed with the messages God channeled through you. Here in the church I pastor I give studies using your audio lessons and books. We don't have the capacity to support you, but you are always in our prayers."

From Pennsylvania:

"My wife and I are almost 90 years old, and we cannot contribute according to what these issues mean to us."

From South Carolina:

"Even though I am in my 'aching eighties,' your preaching and teaching of God's Word rightly divided still moves me. Please continue. (Heading for the 'nodding nineties'!)"



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

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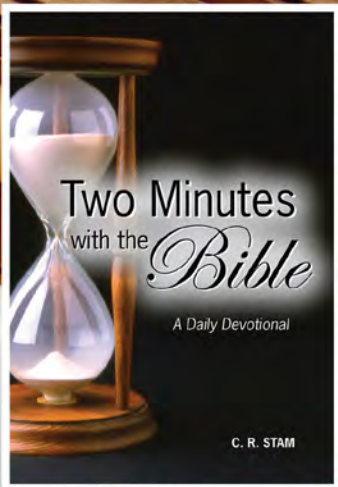
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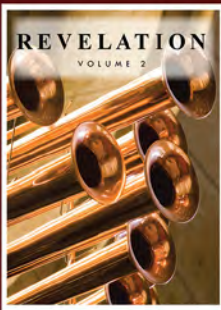


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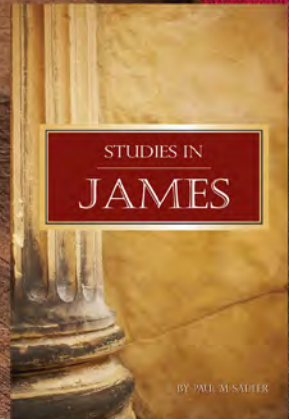


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News and Announcements

Gospel of John Series: Your editor recently completed a two-year study of John's gospel, and BBS webmaster Richard Church is in the process of posting these messages in the MP3 audio section of our website. If you have questions about specific verses in John, or would just like to study the fourth gospel from a grace perspective, this verse-by-verse consideration of this unique gospel might prove helpful to your understanding of the kingdom program.

Pastoral Opportunity: *Greystone Bible Church* in Mobile, Alabama, will be looking for a pastor next month as Pastor Jim Healan retires after many years of faithful and fruitful ministry of God's rightly divided Word. If you would be open to considering this position, church vice president Barry Sims would like to hear from you: Barrysims@comcast.net, 251-303-0669.

Like Clockwork! When something is said to occur with precise regularity, we say it happens "like clockwork." Due to the distractions of life, however, our giving to the Lord's work often falls short of such dependable precision. But a quick trip to the "Donations" page of our website will reveal how you can support BBS by registering to have your credit card charged every month, on the day of your choosing, for any amount you specify. Now your support of what God is doing through *Berean Bible Society* can continue like clockwork!

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The *Chicago Harbor Lighthouse* is located in Chicago, Illinois. It was constructed in 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition, and moved to its present site in 1919. The city designated the lighthouse a Chicago Landmark in April, 2003. Nearby Navy Pier gives a good view of the lighthouse.

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