



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VIII
Issue 196

Believer's Bible Study

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“We Never Guess. We Look It Up!” These words appeared on a small button which my oldest son received many years ago. It was distributed as a promotional item by a leading encyclopedia company. The program encourages students to receive the correct answer by making use of their reference materials.



WHAT ARE WE TO DO? “Study”

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

When introduced to their program I thought immediately of its spiritual application. How strong would the members of the Body of Christ be today if they would only “Look It Up!”

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

In any area of study it is easy simply to go on what one has heard, or on one's preconceived ideas or assumptions; but this is not the nature of a true student and researcher. God wants us to study the Scriptures for ourselves, so that we may know first-hand the facts of His Word. It is such a noble work to seek the truth for one's self. The Book of Acts tells us that this was the spirit of those whom Paul taught in the city of Berea.

These 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).

Dare to have such a noble spirit. Never guess, look it up!

Each believer is to be a *student* of the Word. This is our calling. It is not enough to read books or hear teaching “about” the Bible. We each have a personal responsibility to *KNOW* the Scriptures for ourselves. The “Bible School” is one from which we will never, during this earthly life, graduate.

It is often surprising to hear what some will affirm to be within the pages of the Bible. I have met, on a number of occasions, those who sincerely quote a supposed “Bible” passage that no concordance could ever locate (let alone those who quote passages completely out of their context!).

Many Christians are simply unacquainted with *The Authority* of their faith: The Bible. They are spiritually “illiterate.” They spend their Christian lives *guessing*; they never “Look It Up!”

I often wonder if the pastor of the average church could not preach just about “anything” and the congregation would accept it, without question, as being the “gospel truth” (but the fact is that “anything” is actually being preached by many today!). ▶

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Why do so few believers study? Maybe one reason is that it is hard work!

... And much study is a weariness of the flesh ... (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

I once had a fellow believer tell me that they would rather do a hard day's work than to study all day; that the manual labor was less tiring.

The truth is that study is indeed very demanding. It requires much time and energy. This is true of any study; yet how much more the study of the Bible, but it is eternally rewarding!

Never guess, look it up!

WHY ARE WE TO STUDY? "To Show Thyself Approved"

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).


We study the Scriptures because this is the only way that we can be the unashamed workman whom God can approve. The One who does the approving is not the organization, the institution, the denomination, the church or pastor, but GOD Himself.

Our study is for Him! We are not studying for anyone else. We seek only His approval! We are not preoccupied with what others think.

Those who will find their approval before men will find their own shame before the Father. Conversely, those who are approved unto God will find themselves shamed before the world.

Those who will be "noble" before God (Acts 17:11) will not find their popularity, respect, reputation, prestige, position or honor before men.

Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day (I Corinthians 4:13).

Never guess, look it up! 

Bible Student's Notebook™

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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HOW ARE WE TO STUDY? "Rightly Dividing the Word"

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the Word of Truth** (II Timothy 2:15).*

There is a divinely approved approach to the study of God's Word, a certain way which we are to study the Scriptures: we are to *rightly divide* them.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) articulated well the important principles of right division:

It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after.

The Bible *must* be divided. This is not *just* dividing that we see here, but *rightly* dividing. That is, we are to look for the many dividing marks of God which are in the Scripture. We must learn to make a difference where God Himself makes a difference!

Let us look at an example of *GOD making a difference*:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (Ephesians 3:2-3).

If one wants to be an approved workman he must begin by understanding what God's program is for today. This can be known *only* through the ministry of Paul. The "*dispensation of the Grace of God*" was given to Paul for us. This dispensation was a "*mystery*" that was made known to Paul by divine "*revelation*."

Clearly here God makes a distinction regarding Paul's message, as He revealed that "*which was*

kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). This is in contrast to Peter's message which had been "*spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*" (Acts 3:21). To make note of this distinction is to learn to make a difference where God makes a difference.

God makes a difference between the apostleship of Paul and Peter.

For I speak to you gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the gentiles, I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).

... The Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me [Paul], as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter (Galatians 2:7).

C.I. Scofield made this comment concerning Paul's distinction:

In his writings ALONE we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church (Scofield Reference Bible, page 1252).

William R. Newell also has said,

The failure or refusal to discern the Pauline Gospel as a separate and new revelation, and not a "development from Judaism," accounts for two-thirds of the confusion in many people's minds today as regards just what the Gospel is ... You can judge any man's preaching or teaching by this rule – Is he Pauline? Does his doctrine *start* and *finish* according to those statements of Christian doctrine uttered by the Apostle Paul? (taken from *Paul's Gospel*).

Dear believer, let us not *guess* when it comes to the important question of God's Word, but let us take the time to "Look It Up!" We will find *our* instructions as members of the Body of Christ in Paul's letters of Romans through Philemon.

We cannot just arbitrarily take truth from other dispensations and build an approved spiritual life. Remember the words of Paul in Romans 2:16: ►

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Never guess, look it up!

SECONDHAND “FAITH”

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God (Romans 14:22).

Many, if not most of those in professing Christendom have secondhand “faith.”

It can be a wonderful thing when others share *their* “faith” with us; but sadly much of what many believe was simply passed to them by others, untested and unproven. The only way for faith truly to be ours is for us to go to the Scriptures *themselves*, to be convinced by *them*.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

Note carefully Paul’s words, “*Study to show thyself ...*” and earlier, “*Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God.*”

God has called us into an individual faith before Himself. No one has the right to tell us what to believe, or to provide us with creeds or doctrinal statements. Our faith is to be personal, without constraint, without manipulation.

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

The walk of faith truly begins with freedom from the bondage of religious dominion, and finds its completion standing alone before God by personal faith. Embrace this true liberty: freedom *from* religion, to freedom of faith – the freedom to follow your own heart of faith wherever God may lead.

Being strong in such personal faith is what brings

glory to the Father.

He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God (Romans 4:20).

Do not settle for secondhand “faith,” for that is not truly faith at all – or at least it is not faith in God and in His Word – it is merely faith in men and their words. We must not merely go on what we have heard, or on our preconceived notions and supposition. God desires us to have a faith all our own, so that we may know and believe first-hand what He has said; for faith is simply taking God at His Word.

Don’t be caught up in the mimicry of a secondhand “faith.” Dare to believe God and His Word for yourself!

THE DISPENSATIONS

Whereof I Paul am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God (Colossians 1:25).

The study of the Bible cannot be by a hop-skip-and-jump method.

One must “*rightly divide*” the Word of Truth in order to correctly understand God’s plan and purpose for the ages.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

In Genesis 2:16-17 God commands Adam not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree; but why has God not commanded us to refrain from eating from a certain tree?

The answer is found in “*rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*”

In Genesis 1:29 God limits man to a vegetarian diet; then in Genesis 9:3 He allows man to eat “*every moving thing that liveth.*” Under the Law of

Moses certain animals were once again forbidden as “unclean;” but under the *dispensation* of Grace, God once again allows “every creature of God” (I Timothy 4:3-5) to be eaten, for there is “nothing unclean of itself” (Romans 14:14). All of this is understood *only* by “rightly dividing” the Word of Truth.

Under the Mosaic Law, God commanded the observance of “holy days” and “sabbaths,” yet in Galatians 4:10 Paul condemns the observance of days. The only answer to these apparent contradictions is the *right division* of the Word of Truth.

Without the proper, God-ordained divisions in Scripture, one will end up confused and in error. What is true in one age is not necessarily true in another (note the words “*present truth*” as found in II Peter 1:12).

The Scriptures are the revelation from God of Himself, as well as His plan and purpose for the ages. They were given to us in “*sundry times and in divers manners*” (Hebrews 1:1) over a period of 1600 years, consisting of 66 separate books written by about 40 authors, including kings, priests, prophets, herdsmen, fishermen, a tax collector, a physician, etc.

Some who are blind to *right division* while reading through the Bible scream “contradiction,” while others misapply the Scriptures.

A farmer sets certain tasks for his household in the winter, others in the spring and summer, and yet still other tasks in the fall. Would we consider him to be inconsistent by these changes? Why, no; he is only consistently following the proper rules and plan of agriculture. So it is with God.

To rightly divide the Scriptures there are some essential divisions that must be made (everybody divides the Bible, even if it is only between the “Old” and “New” Testaments). One of the most important divisions is the *dispensational* one.

DISPENSATION: ITS MEANING, AFFECT, DISTRIBUTION AND IMPORTANCE

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the

grace of God which is given me to you-ward (Ephesians 3:2).

The word used to translate “*dispensation*” is *oikonomia*; Paul uses this word four times in his epistles. Surprisingly, many believers are completely unaware of its meaning and importance. It has been a long-neglected subject by the *majority* of Bible students. Just what is a “dispensation?” What Is the Meaning of the Word “Dispensation?”

The word “dispensation” has to do with the act of distribution, or dealing out; it is a divine administration, economy or stewardship.

Dispensation comes from the word *dispense*. It can be seen in the word *dispensary*.

A dispensation is not, as is commonly believed, a period of time. W.C. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives the following definition:

A dispensation is not a period or epoch (a common, but erroneous use of the word), but a mode of dealing, an arrangement, or administration of affairs.

How Do Dispensations Affect Me?

Throughout the Bible God has had different administrations (or dispensations). In God’s dispensations, as with that of the farmer, it is very important to do the work of the present season. For example, there are truths that belong to Israel that do *NOT* belong to the Body of Christ. II Timothy 2:15 plainly gives us the answer:

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Many try to follow the dispensations of the Hebrew Scriptures (Romans 15:4) or of Christ’s earthly ministry (Romans 15:8), but Paul was given the present dispensation *for us* (Colossians 1:25-26, Ephesians 3:2-3, Romans 15:15-16, 16:25-26).

What Does this Present Dispensation “Dispense”?

... *The dispensation of the grace of God ...*
(Ephesians 3:2).

The dispensation given to Paul for us today was one of God’s grace.

This is the key to God’s progressive revelation regarding Himself and His plan of the ages. It is so important for the student of the Scriptures to recognize this wonderful truth. God’s present and pinnacle purpose is one of grace. He is dispensing, or dealing out His grace. We live in God’s *grace dispensary*. The Father’s sole mode of dealing is one of *grace*.

What Is the Importance of Understanding the Dispensations?

And if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (II Timothy 2:5).

A participant in any race must follow the rules for *that* game or they will not win the prize. How sad it is that many believers, even though they are very sincere, won’t be “*approved unto God*” as regarding their service and conduct of life because they did not *study* with the purpose to “*rightly divide the Word of Truth.*” They have not become a part of God’s present purpose – of being a dispensary of the Father’s grace. They neither live in grace themselves, nor with others.

God did not give Paul the administering of a stewardship of grace so that we could simply make “dispensational charts”; but so that we would be receptors and channels of “*the riches of His grace*” (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7).

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward (Ephesians 3:2).

THE SOURCE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH

Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth (John 17:17).

Webster defines truth as “conformity to fact.” By way of example, the government has a record of my birth. My birth is a matter of fact. Now, if I should state my age inconsistently with the record, *i.e.*, without *conformity* to the facts, it would *not be truth*, even if I sincerely believed it to be so. It has been said that facts are stubborn things. It must also be realized that truth is simply conformity to those facts.

The Source of Truth

Truth is obtained from God (John 14:6). God’s truth is established by the *facts* of His Word (Isaiah 8:20). God’s Word is often called “*The Word of Truth*” (Psalm 119:43; II Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; James 1:18), and in II Timothy 2:15 Paul tells us that we must search diligently to discover the facts of the Bible.

God does not always present the same facts for every dispensation. Things that are “true” about the summer are not necessarily “true” about the winter. This is why Peter spoke of “*present truth*” (II Peter 1:12). The simple fact is that God’s Word is “*the Word of Truth*” and it must be “*rightly divided.*”

The Importance of Truth

Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6).

The issue with God is truth. It is what God is looking for in man. He desires “*truth in the inward parts.*”

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

In Jeremiah 5:1 Judah faces invasion and one man, which sought truth, would have been sufficient for

(See **BELIEVER’S**, last page)

Who Is Greater: Adam? or the Lord Jesus Christ?

by – Dan Sheridan

This is a very important question. Many believe that Adam's sin has affected far more people than the Lord's righteous act on the cross. Many say that the vast majority of mankind will perish, or, "burn in hell." If that is the case, who would you say is greater? Well, you would have to say Adam, but what does the Scripture say?

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many (Romans 5:15).

The offence of the one man Adam brought death to all of his descendants. But God's free gift is not like Adam's offence. The work of Christ does not merely restore mankind to innocence, but it does even more than that. Redemption brings blessings to the human race that exceeds what Adam had in the garden. That is why Paul says, "much more."

To put mankind back in the garden would be like giving him a second chance, but the last thing we want is a second chance to fall again. God is not a probation officer! The work of Christ not only undoes what Adam did, but His work puts us into a position where sin and sorrow can never reach us. When the end arrives, mankind will be redeemed, enjoy the presence of God, and never fall again.

In the Garden of Eden, the LORD God visited Adam; but God did not dwell with Adam. However, through the work of the Son God will dwell with man, and man will live in God's presence as redeemed creatures. Surely this is "much more" than was lost in Adam! Even now, those who have



a special salvation are the dwelling place of God in spirit. See Ephesians 3:14-21.

Paul said in I Timothy 4:10-11:

For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach.

We who believe today have the special salvation. Members of the Body of Christ have a hope in heaven, the expectation of Christ returning for us to catch us away to heaven before the great tribulation (I Thessalonians 4). We will have a special place in the heavenly places in the ages to come. The believing Jews have a special salvation, for they will be raised to reign on earth, because God intended for Israel to be the priesthood nation to the rest of the nations. There are others who have a special salvation, but we can not list them here. Yet unbelievers have no life for the ages.

They perish because they do not have eternal life (that is, *eonian* life: which means life for the ages); but the work of Christ will reach them when the ages have run their course, because Jesus Christ is greater than Adam. From the fall of man until the day when God will be All in all is a long process from our point of view. From our point of view the purpose of the ages is a long process: sickness; death and sorrow; nations rising and falling; at last the coming of the Son of God into the world in the fullness of time to accomplish redemption; the present period in which we live; the catching away of the saints in the future; followed by the tribulation period; followed by the 1000 year reign of Christ; then the period after that called the New Heavens and the New Earth. All of that ►

coming from God, and working back to God. This seems to us like a long time, but from God's point of view it is not. God is working out His purposes during the ages, and finally, through the work of a willingly subjected Son, Who will subdue all things to Himself (as Adam was supposed to do), He will hand over a perfected creation to God that God may be "All in all."

Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, "All things are put under Him," it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under

BELIEVER'S (continued from page 1898)

God to have pardoned and preserved the entire nation. We thus see the importance of "one man" seeking truth (Ezekiel 22:30).

Anyone who would suggest that right division is of no importance is either ignorant of the truth, or has no love of the truth – nor of the "the Word of Truth."

THE FREEDOM OF TRUTH

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).

Truth liberates, while error enslaves; and the bondage that comes from error is far more binding than that of a physical prison.

The entire world around us lies in the deep bondage of error. The Scripture speaks of them as,

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 3:7).

Theirs are,

Him, that God may be All in all (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

Truly the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Adam.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (I Corinthians 15:21-22).

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:18-19).

The Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Adam! Much More!

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth ... (I Timothy 6:5).

Truth has never been popular. The masses have never possessed it and its freedom. One of Israel's sins was that truth had fallen in the streets (Isaiah 59:14). Strangely, the truth will also make enemies:

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? (Galatians 4:16).

Some "receive not the love of the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:10), and will "not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:3-4).

Oh, that we may pray with David of years ago,

Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy Truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day (Psalm 25:4-5).

