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Training for Ministry | September, October, November | Rightly Dividing God's Word

The Message and Ministry of the APOSTLE PAUL and Its Importance for Us Today

Dr. Robert Nix, President

As we consider the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, it is essential to understand his unique role in presenting God's redemptive plan for mankind in the Dispensation of Grace. Saved by the Lord on the road to Damascus, from the beginning, Paul was designated by the Lord to be a *"chosen vessel of Mine, to bear My name before Gentiles, Kings, and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:15). Paul's appointment was to be the conduit through which the risen Lord would reveal His will for His Church, the Body of Christ.

When we look at the Bible objectively we can see that the Apostle Paul was used by God to write almost half of what is considered to be the New Testament. Was the appointment of Paul a continuation of the ministry of the Twelve Apostles, or did God reveal something new to him through the resurrected Lord Jesus? The Apostle Paul was indeed unique from the Twelve, and God revealed to him a distinct message. It was a message whereby God was creating something entirely new. In his letter to the Ephesian church, he calls the Church the *"one new man"* made up of both Jews and Gentiles in one Body (Eph. 2:15). It is in understanding Christ's message through Paul that we find the key to understanding what God is doing today.

A Special Mission with a Unique Commission

To see Paul as our example in truth or doctrine means that we see him in his rightful role. In the gospels, the Twelve Apostles had a distinct role of being heirs of the Kingdom, judges in the Kingdom, and proclaimers of the Kingdom. However, from the outset of Paul's salvation, the Lord sets him apart with a unique role under a completely new program.

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THE INSTITUTE UPDATE

There is much to be thankful for at *Berean Bible Institute*, and we are both honored and humbled to see God use BBI in a significant way. I am also thankful for a dedicated faculty and staff. We are truly blessed to have administrative staff and faculty who are dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and the mission of *Berean Bible Institute* to train Pastors, Missionaries, and Christian Leaders for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel of the Grace of God.

Since our last update, we have been very busy, preparing for our Fall Term classes. I have also had the opportunity to travel and speak at several churches and conferences. Since July, I have been able to represent *Berean Bible Institute* in Michigan, Alabama, Wisconsin, and Georgia. Pastor Justin Lynn (BBI Director of Technology and Institutional Advancement) and his family were also able to participate in the Bethesda Church Missions Conference in Minnesota. We praise the Lord for the opportunities to share what God is doing at BBI in churches and conferences.

Congratulations Are in Order

Berean Bible Institute would like to congratulate Pastor Dwight Anderson who was recently installed as the Pastor of *Bethesda Church* in Pryor Lake, Minnesota. BBI has been blessed to have had Pastor Dwight teach our evangelism course at BBI. He truly has a heart for seeing people saved and established in the Lord Jesus. Please keep him and his wife Darlene in prayer as they begin this new phase of their lives.

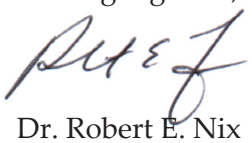
Pastor and Elder Leadership Luncheon

On October 19th, we will host a Pastor and Elder Leadership Luncheon on the campus of the *Berean Bible Institute.* This is a wonderful opportunity for pastors and their elders to fellowship and be challenged by God's Word. We are blessed to have Pastor Matt Ritchey as our guest speaker. Pastor Ritchey serves as the Associate Director of *Bible Doctrines to Live By*, Pastor of *Grace Bible Church* in Croton, Michigan, and Managing Editor of Publications at *Berean Bible Institute.* These luncheons are a great opportunity for fellow leaders to encourage and pray for each other.

Have You Considered Traveling to Israel?

On May 15th through May 25th, *Berean Bible Institute* will be hosting a trip to the nation of Israel. This will be a wonderful opportunity to see the places that you have read about in your Bibles all of your lives. We will visit key biblical sights throughout the nation beginning with Caesarea on the Mediterranean, then two days in the north visiting sites around the Sea of Galilee, and then spend six days in and around Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, we will visit the Mount of Olives, Masada, the Dead Sea, Jericho, and Ein Gedi where David hid from King Saul. These are just some of the places we will visit. If you are interested, please see the BBI website for more complete information. Space is limited so sign up sooner than later.

Serving together,



Dr. Robert E. Nix
President, *Berean Bible Institute*

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Paul received his message by direct revelation from the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. This is an important point because it helps to explain where Paul fits into God's plan of redemption. Many people struggle with the idea that there is too much emphasis on Paul and not the earthly teachings of the Lord Jesus or the rest of the Bible. To be honest, I bristle when I hear statements that insinuate that the rest of the Bible is somehow less important than Paul's epistles. We must never forget that *"all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable"* (II Tim. 3:16). However, that does not diminish the fact that what was revealed to the Apostle Paul were the words of Christ Jesus and are critical in our understanding of what God is doing today in the Dispensation of Grace. Therefore, to focus on Paul and his message is to focus on the Lord Jesus and His plan for His Church. Paul very clearly explains what he received came directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1,11; Eph. 3:1-3).

Paul makes it crystal clear that his message was unique to him and was not given by being handed down from the other apostles; instead, it was received through a special revelation and appointment by God. It is essential to understand that with a new and unique message comes the responsibility to proclaim it and help others understand it. For Paul, and those who ministered alongside him, the propagating of the message of Grace was "mission critical." Paul writes in II Timothy 2:1-3: *"You, therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You, therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."* For Paul and his companions, it was essential to teach and train others who would continue to proclaim what God was doing in the new Dispensation. If you think about it, we benefit today from what Paul told Timothy in these verses. Those faithful to proclaim the gospel of Grace have passed it on to us, and we are called to do the same.

The Doctrines of Grace Establish the Believer in the Lord

The vast majority of the Scriptures were written with the nation of Israel as the focus. Only in Paul's epistles do we begin to find a new standard of operation for this Dispensation. Paul declares that national Israel has been set aside for a time, and God is doing something completely different (Rom.11:25). Paul makes it clear that God is now working in and through what he refers to as the Church the Body of Christ. This Church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who come to Christ based on the finished work of Christ on the cross (Rom. 10:12). The fact that one group is not above the other is something completely new (Eph. 2:14-16). Therefore, it should be of no surprise that the mode and means of operations of this "new body" should be found in Paul's epistles.

William R. Newell makes the following observation concerning the importance of understanding the distinct nature of Paul's epistles.

> *"Take Romans through Philemon out of the Bible, and you are bereft of Christian doctrine. For instance, if you were to take Paul's epistles out of the Bible, you cannot find anything about the Church the Body of Christ, for no other apostle mentions the Body of Christ. You cannot find one of the great mysteries, such as the Rapture of the Church or the mystery of the present hardening of Israel in the Old Testament, and the four Gospels, or Hebrews through Revelation; for no other apostle speaks of any of those mysteries. Paul alone reveals them. You cannot find the exact meaning of any of the great doctrines, such as propitiation, reconciliation, sanctification, except in Paul's epistles. You cannot find what is perhaps the most tremendous fact of every real Christian life, that of his personal union with the Lord of Glory. Paul is the great divinely chosen opener to us of truth for this age."*[1]

Newell succinctly states that it is in Paul's epistles where we find the "one new man;" it is in Paul's epistles where we are taught that one day the Lord's Church will be caught up to meet Him in the air. It is even in Paul's epistles where we learn what has happened to Israel as a result of their rejection of the Messiah. Paul's epistles both demonstrate God's plan for the Church as a whole, as well as also giving the individual member guidance on how to navigate or live in a sin-cursed world. From Newell's quote, it should be obvious why the Pauline epistles are so important. Simply put, they are important because they are what God is doing today.

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The Doctrines of Grace are to be the Primary Focus of the Church the Body of Christ

We are told that the local church is *"the pillar and support of the truth,"* and, of course, the best way to combat error is truth (I Tim. 3:14- 4:6). All believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of our works to the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 14:10-12; Rom. 5:9,10). It is God Who decides what is truth and by what message or set of standards man will be judged. Paul's teachings on sanctification and obedience are to be expressed in the life of the believer based on what was given to the Apostle for the Church. When you and I stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ, we will be judged by God's standard for this Dispensation and no other. As we find ourselves being bombarded with religious and philosophical teachings rooted in pseudo-Christianity or pagan worldviews, our only hope is to be established in God's truth for today. Paul declares that the believer is to *"walk in Him rooted and built up established in the faith"* (Col. 2:6,7). It is only then that the believer can stand.

The Doctrines of Grace are to Lead in the Transformation of the Believer and the Glorification of God

The primary focus of Paul's message that he received from the resurrected Lord were truths given to establish and transform the believer, ultimately leading to the glorification of the Lord through us. The doctrines of Grace should lead to transformation. When you examine the prayers of the Apostle Paul, you see that his prayers for the churches were for knowledge as well for obedience. Truth should always have an outlet, and our outlet is to practice what we know from God's Word by faith.

According to a number of sources, the Dead Sea is the lowest point on the planet (not counting the deepest trench under the sea floor). It is filled with many minerals that make it unfit for life. Its salt content is nine times that of any ocean. Water from the Jordan River and other smaller streams feed into the Dead Sea, but the Dead Sea has no outlet whereby its contents can feed other sources. For the believer who has been transformed by the power of Christ, we are called to *"be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: that you may walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing Him being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Col. 1:9,10). Paul's prayer highlights both knowledge and application as essential for the life of the believer. The believer is to live in light of what they know and, in doing so, bear fruit for the Lord.

By examining the significance of the Apostle Paul and his ministry, we can clearly determine that based on the uniqueness of his call by the resurrected Lord and the uniqueness of his message, his role as the Apostle to the Church, the Body of Christ, carries with it the same importance as Moses did to the children of Israel. Paul's message was given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ and is the standard by which members of the Church are to live. The doctrines of Grace given to and through the Apostle Paul are key in establishing the believer to live a fruitful life serving the Lord.

The ministry and message given to the Apostle Paul cannot be overstated. Paul's words to the Church, the Body of Christ are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Church, the Body of Christ, and as such are to be understood and obeyed. In this, we glorify our Savior, and that is our highest calling.

1. Newell, William R. "Special Note on Paul's Gospel." *Lessons on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans: Also, Outline Lessons on the Book of Acts*, J.I.C. Wilcox, 1925, p. 337–344.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

For Our Learning

Pastor Matthew Ritchey, Managing Editor

"Now these things were our examples…."
I Corinthians 10:6

Paul specifically appeals to the post-exile Israelites journeying through the wilderness as an example for how we live in Grace. How many of us have shaken our heads when we hear of the persistent whining and disobedience of those people in the wilderness? God miraculously secured Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and the people doubted as they saw Pharoah's army coming after them (Ex. 14:11-12). God was thundering on the mountain while the people demanded a calf to worship (Ex. 32:1). God provided them manna, and the people complained about not having meat to eat (Num. 11:4). God provided strong leadership, and the people complained that they wanted a different leader (Num. 12:1-3). We read such accounts, shake our heads in disbelief, and assure ourselves that we would never be so ungrateful.

First Corinthians 10 begins by reminding us that the Israelites had collectively witnessed the presence and goodness of the Lord. He went before them in a pillar of smoke by day; they were under His protection. He gave them deliverance as they passed on dry ground through the Red Sea. Every Israelite was identified with God's people, the nation of Israel. In the wilderness, the Lord provided food and water for them. He was with them every step of the way. Despite His presence and provision, many of them displeased the Lord through their continued failure to trust in His goodness and blessing. They failed to remember that He was with them and to recall the mighty deliverance He had accomplished for them. They had been given every evidence to trust the Lord; yet many were overcome with temptation and sin.

Then, Paul writes that that history of Israel can be an example for those of us who are living in the Dispensation of the Grace of God (10:6). First is an example that "*we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*" The Old Testament record of Israel in the wilderness can remind us to not be distracted by the things of this world (Rom. 12:1-2) but to have our desire set upon eternal things (Col. 3:1-2). Israel allowed themselves to be so overcome by their physical troubles at times (i.e., Pharoah's army, hunger, thirst) that they forgot that they were headed for the land God had promised to their fathers. They desired the things they had in Egypt, forgetting the cost and burden that came with the desired things. We, the Body of Christ, are not headed to a Promised Land on earth, but we are promised that our conversation is in Heaven—that is where we are headed (Phil. 3:20). We need to be often reminded that this world is not our eternal home, and sin and the world should not dictate our desires and actions. We should not be so caught up in worldly comforts that we neglect the eternal service we have in Christ.

Another lesson is "*neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*" (vs. 7). None of us would consider ourselves an idolater. Yet, there is a reason that there are two different and yet similar commandments; one regarding graven images and another stating that no gods were to be placed above God. Idolatry is more than statues; anything we honor more than God becomes a god to us. We need to be reminded that placing anything in the position that God deserves is idolatry. The Israelites were guilty of worshipping a golden calf (Ex. 32:1-8), even while God was on the mountain talking to Moses directly behind them. They turned their attention and adoration to another god. While many of us will not be found guilty worshipping a golden calf crafted by our local preacher, we need to take inventory of how much of our time, talents, and treasures God is receiving from us compared to all of those other things. Does God have first place in our lives? Is the Lord our priority? The Old Testament can remind us of the adoration God deserves.

Another warning is "*neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand*" (vs. 8). The Israelites also took wives of the other nations who turned their hearts from the Lord. Paul specifically refers to an incident where Israelites married Moabites, which led to Baal worship. A plague went through the nation as a consequence of their disobedience (Num. 25:1-9). The reminder for us is to be very careful with whom we associate. We must not let people—spouses, family, friends—turn

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our hearts from devotion and service to the Lord. We have been given the privilege of representing our Savior here on earth and we should not allow anyone to distract us from our divine responsibility. Paul may have pointed specifically to this incident in Israel's history to remind us that sin has consequences. While God is not judging us in the same way today as He did Israel then, life still follows the rule that you reap what you sow (Gal. 6:7). Sin never brings lasting benefit or joy. And, although people may have convinced themselves of good intentions when associating with the unsaved (e.g., "It is okay that my girlfriend/boyfriend is not saved because I will win them to the Lord.") the most common result of contracting with an unbeliever is the believer's heart is distracted from the things of God.

We can also learn "*neither tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents*" (vs. 9). Have you ever decided to speak back to one of your parents only to receive the warning, "Don't tempt me, child"? I am so thankful for the Lord's patience and unending grace because if it were any normal person I would have tested His limits long ago. We should not exasperate the Lord with our lack of trust. In Numbers 21:4-6, the Lord had just given the nation of Israel an impressive victory over the Canaanites. They showed their appreciation by arriving in Edom and beginning to complain that the journey was too difficult for them. The Lord got their attention by sending fiery serpents to bite the people (Num. 21:4-6). They had witnessed the Lord's deliverance time and time again; still, they turned to doubt when the going got tough. Yes, this can serve as a reminder to us. We must not forget the victory we have been given already through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:37; I Cor. 15:57) and, instead, begin to complain that life and service are too hard. The Lord may have given us the strength to get through one difficult time, but when the next difficult circumstance arises, we throw up our hands in despair. We need to remember that we can get through every obstacle in life in a similar way as the Israelites. The Israelites were to depend on Jehovah to give them the might and victory. We are told we can do all things "*through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13). Different circumstance, same source of strength to overcome.

Another relevant reminder: "*Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer*" (vs. 10). Despite all that the Lord had done for them, the Israelites never wasted a moment to complain. I give Moses a lot of credit. There were times the Lord declared His desire to wipe out all of the people for their whining, but Moses interceded for the people multiple times. All that the Lord had done for them and they still found cause to complain, and there were times the Lord judged them for their ungratefulness (Num. 16:41-49). The Body of Christ has been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3). We are eternally saved from sin, death, and hell (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 1:13-14). We can be forever thankful for the victory given to us through Christ Jesus (I Cor. 15:57). Yet, how many times do we allow our discomforts to distract us from the joy of the Lord? How many times would we be caught murmuring in regards to our circumstances? We should be found constantly living and expressing thanksgiving toward the Savior (I Thess. 5:18).

Lest we still think the Old Testament has nothing for the Body of Christ to learn, Paul was inspired to write again: "*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition*" (vs. 11). We are holy beings residing in a mortal body; therefore, we need constant reminders of our rich blessings and new life in Christ. So, the next time you are in the Old Testament reading about Israel, instead of shaking your head and sighing about those ungrateful Israelites, ask yourself what you can learn from their example. Remember, "*let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (vs. 12). Pride is a result of putting confidence in the flesh, and we know that those in flesh cannot please God (cf. Rom. 8:6-8). Be encouraged that "*there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*." The Israelites faced temptation after temptation, and God was always there to offer them the solution. Sadly, Israel often failed by turning from God's strength and forgetting His promises and, instead, trying to work out a solution themselves or falling into a mindset of despair and fear. When confronted with temptation, remember the faithful God of the Israelites Who has promised you the strength to overcome and persevere. Until the day we reach Christ-like perfection, may we be trusting the Holy Spirit to use the Word of God in our lives to make us more like our Savior and Lord.

New Perspective on Scripture

Is it possible that a trip to Israel will give you a new perspective on Scripture? Yes! In Luke 19:35-40, we find the account of Jesus traveling over the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem on a donkey and, upon nearing Jerusalem, the crowd surrounding Him give Him praise as the King and Savior. The Pharisees commanded Jesus to make the crowd stop their cries. Jesus responded that if they stopped, the very stones would cry out. For thousands of years, the adversary has been trying to bury the truth and silence the witness of God. Today, in Israel, the very stones are crying out. Israel is filled with stones, everywhere you turn. Archaeology is being carried out, the past is being uncovered, and the stones are speaking out to the truth and accuracy of Scripture. Your tour of Israel will make you realize that everything recorded in the Bible is real. The villages, the places, the land, the water, and the people that lived during those times are all very real.

Standing at the overlook on the Mount of Olives, looking down at the Temple Mount and Jerusalem, is not just a tourist spot. It is the general location where this Luke passage took place. Christ had crested the mountain and was looking down at Jerusalem, and Scripture says He wept over their unbelief. The Matthew passage of this account says the people were shouting "Hosanna," which means "Save Now." That was the very purpose He had come. In just a matter of days, He would give His life and complete His eternal purpose to provide redemption for all.

I found that every place we visited on my trip to Israel made the Scriptures came alive. I had often read about being on the Sea of Galilee, but then, I was there feeling the wind and the waves against the boat (Don't try walking on the water; see Job 9:8). Being present in person causes all of the accounts in Scripture to come alive. That was true in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and every location we visited. It was real. After my trip to Israel, when I read Scripture now, I can see the location. I can understand the journey because I was there. I can appreciate the history that took place in that very land, going back to Abraham. We can rely on Scripture because it is true and real. The stones are crying out.

Pastor Floyd Baker Jr. (9/13/22)

Pastor Floyd Baker Jr. and his wife Lois traveled with us on our Berean Bible Society/Berean Bible Institute trip in 2019.

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The mission of *Berean Bible Institute* is to train Pastors, Missionaries, and Christian Leaders for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God given to and through the Apostle Paul. ***Berean Bible Institute, Inc.*** *admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.*

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