# *The Grace System of PerceptionColossians 1:3-8COL-052*

We are studying Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," and this is segment number 30.

## The Word of Truth, the Gospel

We have seen that the apostle Paul has pointed out that wonderful temporal and eternal things happened in the lives of the Colossians Christians when they came to understand what Paul refers to as the grace of God in truth, in verse 5: "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven," Paul says, "of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel." This word of truth brought them into eternal life in heaven as a gift which they had appropriated from God by trusting in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior – He Who had paid the divine penalty of death for their sins. Because the penalty of death has been paid, that is no longer an issue. Sin is no longer an issue with God. The issue with God is whether you'll accept the payment in your behalf.

This truth had enabled them to grow into spiritual maturity through the knowledge and practice of Bible doctrine, which freed them from enslavement to the old sin nature which was in them. They no longer had to go around as slaves to all the lust patterns that are naturally in man. We are born with a deep propensity to do what is wrong, and unless we have a counter measure to enable us more than human willpower to overcome it, we will become victims every time. It is the truth that the Colossians learned of Scripture, the Word of God, combined with the power of the Spirit of God in them then enabled them to rise above the sin nature enslavement. The marvelous grace of God is, however, usually ignored or perverted in human experience by the spiritual blindness of the wisdom of man. Human good works from the old sin nature in man are offered to God for salvation in place of the kindness of God's free gift grace offer through Christ. The Bible is dismissed, and man's wisdom is substituted – human good for the kindness of God. But the kindness of God is centered in one person, Jesus Christ. If you do not accept Him, the kindness of God (the grace of God) cannot be expressed towards you.

The entertainer comedian George Burns was born in 1896. He lived to last Saturday, 1996. He was an even 100 years old. Subtract your age from 100 now, and that's how far you have to go to equal the grace opportunity which was extended to George Burns. He had, by biblical principle in God's decision, an allotment of 70 years. And he got 30 bonus years, because he had a grace-of-God, physical, genetic structure, and an extension of life.

The problem, however, is that George Burns, as a Jew, rejected Jesus Christ. He could not have anything to do with Him. He did not consider Him the Messiah Savior. George Burns could make us laugh from the turn of the century through the days of radio to the times of the movies, through the era of television. He had all the world at his disposal. He had his ever present cigar in his hand, because one time in Vaudeville he tried to figure out what to do with his hands, so he decided that's what he'd do with them. And he always sang little songs (little ditties) that he never quite finished. And he and was a great deal of entertainment to people.

Well, how are things with Mr. Burns today – to have 100 years of grace? How many of you think you're going to have that? How many of you think you're going to have 100 years of divine grace to make it? All you've got left on tap is what you have from now to 70, and then you're on borrowed time.

So, this marvelous grace of God is no small thing. And how to function under that grace is even a greater thing. And most people don't have the foggiest notion of what constitutes the grace of God – what it is to be under that enormous divine favor, and to be engulf with superiority of the super grace of God, and to be under His special consideration and care, and how to take full advantage of it. And that is a shame. That is your heritage as a Christian, and you should know that.

The Bible is not accepted today, by and large, as a divinely inspired, and consequently, inerrant Word of God by these pseudo-intellectuals. And that's why most people do not understand what the grace of God is really like – what Paul calls the truth about the grace of God. And unfortunately, a lot of these pseudo-intellectuals are right there in the pulpit.

An Episcopalian bishop is on trial in his church. William Murchison has an article in the "Dallas Morning News," March 6, of this year, 1996, in which he wrote about this Episcopalian bishop who is on trial for heresy. And Murchison himself is an Episcopalian. And he writes this article relative to this trial because the Episcopalian bishop ordained a practicing homosexual to be a deacon in his church. And the bishop was interviewed about the problem – that the Episcopal Church has a doctrinal statement which is based upon the authority of Scripture. The Episcopal Church accepts that religious matters must be decided by the Bible, and that the Bible is quite clear that homosexuality is a sin. In fact, it is one of those sins that God lists under the category of what he calls abominations, which means that it is revoltingly discussing to the deity of God, and that there can be no doubt that the Bible was quite clear, both in the Old and New Testament, that this is a very great evil.

Also, people may have the inclination to certain sins, and they do because they have a sin nature. They do have an inclination of fornication. They do have an inclination to steal things. They do have an inclination to adultery, and all the other things that the Word of God forbids in His moral code. But they're also told that the practice of those things is forbidden.

Well, the Episcopalian bishop took upon himself to ignore the policy of his church, and ordained this practicing homosexual (not just one who had that inclination, but a practicing homosexual). And this inclination, incidentally, is not genetic, but which is chosen, and which is created in a person. And the reason we know it's not genetic, apart from other scientific evidence, is that the Bible never calls something sin which you have no volitional control. And the Bible very clearly defines this as a sin. It was such a great sin in the Old Testament with theocracy that it received the death penalty.

Well, the bishop chose to ignore that. And that's the reason for which he's being put on trial by his church. And quoting from William Murchison's article: "He was asked by a reporter: ‘how come, if the church hasn't validated homosexual practice during all these centuries, it is time to do so now?’ 'The culture has changed,' replied Bishop Righter."

I think he should change his name to "Wronger." His name is "Righter" R I G H T E R. That's an oxymoron.

"'The culture has changed,' replied Bishop Righter loftily. 'The idea of homosexual and gay lesbian spirituality has entered the mainstream of the culture. The church has to stay alert and alive to what's happening in the culture. We're talking about the full social contract being reshaped.' But isn't homosexuality disapprobation in the Scripture. 'We do not worship the Bible,' replied the bishop. We use it for interpretation. We don't take it literally.'

"'Well,' Murchison said, 'No. Not when it says what you don't want it to say. In such cases you interpret it to your liking. You make it read any way you like.'"

That's right on target. This is the issue. People don't understand the grace of God because they have ministers who don't understand the authority of the inerrancy of the inspired Word of God from which they can learn about the grace of God. Consequently, the human race is bereft of spiritual insight, and it is in a spiritual tailspin.

Such a human viewpoint of the Bible makes it impossible to understand the great truth about the grace of God in salvation and in daily living. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-22, the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "For the Word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (human viewpoint) and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world, through its wisdom, did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

Now, the apostle says exactly the opposite of what Bishop Righter says. Bishop Righter says that human wisdom, and the progression of human history, and of culture, must decide what the Bible means today. And yet, the apostle Paul says that human reason will never arrive at what God thinks. It will never grasp what is the significant truth of scripture. Only the Word of God can proclaim that to us.

Now, we have a terrible problem here when we come to dealing with human rationality (human reason).

The great TV detective Hercules Poirot, as he cleverly reasons through to solve his cases, periodically says that he must stop to rest his little gray cells, so that he will be able to discover the truth. For those of you who are unscientific and unacquainted with physiological matters, the little gray cells are up here in the brain, and that's what he's referring to.

However, the arrogant, smug intellectuals, like Bishop Righter, who reject the authority of Scripture have nothing to rest at all, in the way of little gray cells. Thus, they get exactly nowhere when they try to reason their way to what God thinks. They are going to discover nothing about God's grace and God's truth consequently.

The inspiration of the Bible is a fact of life. And yet I realize that it does raise a question with people: How do you that the Bible is really the truth and the Word of God?

One of the latest books that an excellent writer on prophetic matters (a man named Grant Jeffrey) is called Final Warning. And on page 9 of his book he says, in reference to how we know that the Bible is really the Word of God: "Fulfilled Biblical prophecy is a powerful proof to an unbelieving world that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Therefore, it can be relied upon when the Scriptures record that Jesus Christ said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me' (John 14:6).

"Careful examination of the ancient prophecies about the destruction of Tyre and Babylon; the incredibly detailed predictions about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth; and, hundreds of other fulfilled prophecies provide incontrovertible proof that the Bible was inspired by God, and can therefore be relied upon regarding its teaching about the destiny of our eternal souls.

"Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest scientist in history, wrote about the fascinating prophecies of the Bible. As a Christian, Newton believed that a comparison of the fulfillment of prophecy with the original prophecy provided a powerful proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures. He wrote, 'For the event (the outcome, that is) of things predicted many ages before will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence.'

"In this book, as well as in my previous books, including Armageddon, Appointment with Destiny, I provide ample proof that the predictions made in the Scriptures hundreds of years before their fulfillment provide overwhelming proof that the Bible is the reliable and inspired Word of God."

Those of you who are acquainted with the Berean evangelism brochure know that that is the approach that we took, exactly. We answer that question because we challenge people that the religion in which they were born into, or the no-religion in which they were born into, how do they know that this is what God thinks, and are they ready to go to the other side and face whatever is out there in eternity on that basis? And our point was that you have to have some authority. And the only reliable authority is the Bible. And why is that true? And then we proceeded to point out that only the Bible, of all the religious books of the world, gives anything in the way of great prophetic statements: something that's going to happen 800 to 1,000 years in the future, and it has to be fulfilled in detail – great details about what's going to happen in the future. In names exactly the city in which Jesus is going to be born, and all of details exactly and precisely of His life. 800 to 1,000 years later, what happens? It's all fulfilled – every detail: not a one skipped, even to the very timetable of the very day in which these things are predicted to come about. None of the religious books of the world has borne the influence on mankind that the Bible has, because to thinking, unprejudiced minds (those who are not intellectual yo-yos, and who have some acquaintance with what's in the Bible – most people are not acquainted, but those who do, with these prophecies), they know that human beings could not have done this.

Nostradamus makes prophecies that everybody is agog over, but he speaks in great generalities. His words that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and people come up with the supposed solutions that they have found, but it is nothing like what's in the Bible: exact places, geographically; exact timetables; and, exact people. For example, it names Cyrus in the Old Testament – that he was going to come on the scene, and he would permit the people to leave their Babylonian captivity, and go back and rebuild the city of Jerusalem (the walls around the city), and when the prophets opened it, and showed this Persian king his name in the Scriptures, his eyes opened wide, and he knew he had a command far above human authority. That's the kind of a book the Bible is, and that's why it's the truth. And that's why you ignore it at the peril of your immortal soul.

On page 12 of Jeffrey's new book, Final Warning, about this person of Jesus Christ that comes out through the message of the Bible, he says this: "In the literature of mankind, the Bible has stood alone over thousands of years in its overwhelming influence on the thinking and behavior of billions of souls. While all other books were written to inform us, the Bible was uniquely written to transform us through the divine message. As we carefully examine the message of the Bible, it will transform us as we are touched by the Holy Spirit of God who has inspired its human authors to communicate His message to His creation. Our attitude should always be as a student carefully searching the Holy Word of God to learn its truths. We should all remain lifelong students of the Bible, ever seeking to learn more until our final graduation day, when each of us will meet the author face-to-face.

"As David Livingston, the great missionary and explorer of Africa, wrote, 'All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in His divine book.' The greatest minds of the last 2,000 years have studied the Bible, and have declared the overwhelming importance of Scripture, and its significance in the life of mankind." The great Christian writer St. Augustine explored the writings of the classical authors in his search for truth before he found an abiding faith in Jesus Christ. Augustine wrote these words indicating the profound difference between the Word of God and the writings of men: 'I have read in Plato and Cicero sayings that are very wise and very beautiful, but I never read in either of them: 'Come unto me, all that labor, and are heavy-laden.''

"In a similar vein, the writer Charles Lamb described the enormous difference between Jesus Christ and Shakespeare, the greatest writer in the history of the English language as follows, 'If Shakespeare should come into this room, we would all rise, but if Jesus Christ should come in, we would all kneel.

So when we deal with the Bible, we are dealing with truth – truth which, in every way, has been confirmed to any logical mind open to the truth. And this truth is absolutely essential in terms of our eternal destiny. For the believers in the age of the church, God has provided a marvelous grace system for learning spiritual truth. And that's what we want to focus on today. God, for the people of the age of grace (the age of the truth – the age of the church) has provided a system for you to maximize the functioning of grace in your life, and through the grace of God, to come into the fulfillment of what Peter has written in 2 Peter 3:18. Peter says, "But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Grace growth is dependent upon growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is dependent upon growth in the knowledge of doctrine. If you cannot learn the principles of the Scripture, you're not going to learn anything. And you're going to be a nobody, and you will have nothing, and you'll be beaten up by the devil left and right. A grace system, however, has been provided by which all spiritual truths pass from the mind of God to the minds of his spiritually born-again believers. There is a system for you to secure the mind of God. That in itself blows our minds on a human level. But that is your calling as a Christian – to get rid of that stupid mind with which you were born, with all of its human viewpoint frame of reference and decisions and opinions, and gradually transform it into the very mind of Christ, so that you become a person of royalty with the greatest wisdom; the greatest judgment; and, the greatest guidance that any human being could ever ask for.

Human IQ, I'm happy to tell you, is not the means for comprehending and gaining the blessings of spiritual wisdom that is in the Bible. Your IQ does not determine how far you are going to be able to go in entering into the blessings of the grace of God. And there are a lot of different levels of IQs in the human race. These are not the factors that come to play in spiritual things. We know that for 1 Corinthians 2:9-12. Paul says, "But just as it is written, things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard (principles of spiritual phenomena), and which have not entered the heart of man (the heart of man is the mind of man – things that man could not possibly conceive), all that God has prepared for those who love Him (the doctrines of the Word of God), for to us God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God (the deep things of God). For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of a man which is in him. Even so, the thoughts of God, no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God."

"Now in the Greek Bible, the word for spirit is the Greek is the word "pneuma" (pnyoo'-mah). When you look at the word "pneuma," from which we get the English word "pneumatics," because they have to do with spirit and air, you can't tell from the Greek word whether this is referring to deity, or whether this is referring to the human spirit. The human spirit is described as "pneuma." God the Holy Spirit is described by the word "pneuma." So, there in verse 12, we have to have an interpretive decision that is not entirely clear. I'm inclined to think that in verse 12: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but we have received the spirit," that should be a small "s," and it should be "the spirit *which* is from God." I think it is referring to our human spirit which is freely given to us by God. We are all born into the human race spiritually dead. Because we're spiritually dead, we have no point of contact with God. We know zilch. That's why you can have a high IQ and be a dummy in spiritual things, which is the way it is. But once you are alive spiritually through regeneration, through faith in Christ, now you have a point of contact with God. Now you have a way of learning spiritual things. Now you have a place in your spirit to store the things of God, the knowledge of the truth, and consequently, you have something by which you may enter into grasping the grace of God, and to entering into all kinds of spiritual understanding.

## Unbelievers

So, it is what God has given us in a living human spirit that makes a difference. Therefore, unbelievers can know nothing about the things of God. When they speak about things of God, unbelievers sound like unmitigated fools. They have no understanding of spiritual Biblical matters. All that comes through is their arrogant ignorance. It is true that the natural man (the Bible calls the unsaved person "the natural man") may possess a high IQ, and he may have an extensive education. He may have a set of polished manners. He may have a compassionate spirit. He may have an eloquence with words. He may have a logical mind, and he may even have a winsome personality. But the deep things of the Holy Spirit in Scripture are totally hidden from him, including the principle of the grace of God. He cannot grasp the kindness and the lovingness of a God toward sinners, and the misery in which they find themselves in their sin.

So, don't be impressed by people whom the world looks up to. Don't be impressed by people who have fame and fortune. They are zeros – nothing. I tell you again that anybody who is not born-again spiritually is an abnormal person. Why do you want to take advice from somebody who's abnormal? Why do you want to imitate somebody who is abnormal? Anybody who is not born-again spiritually is only two-thirds alive. He only has a live body and a live soul, but he has a dead human spirit, and that makes him stink. It makes him stink. So, do not be impressed with the people of our world who are dead spiritually, and are headed for the lake of fire. They are role models for only the things that are bad.

## Carnal Believers

The carnal man is a born-again Christian who is walking and living in a life of sin, and he can only grasp the simplest spiritual truths of Scripture. Therefore, he's spiritually tossed about by every false doctrine and by every human viewpoint, and he's subject to all the sneaky tricky wiles of the devil. That's a Christian – who can be pushed around like that because he is out of temporal fellowship. It's only the spiritual Christian, the one who is positive to the Word of God that can stand up to the devil. And remember that he confesses his known sins to God the Father, not to the people. Don't ever confess your sins to people. You have no right to take all your dirty laundry, and to contaminate the minds of another Christian by telling them about your personal sins. That's a matter between you and God. And you may have a problem that you can enunciate in general words, and say, "It's in this category, and I seek some kind of advice," and you may get advice. We don't need to know the specifics of your personal failures. We're all well-acquainted enough with our own personal failures. But the Spiritual Christian, who has handled his own life, and confessed his sins to God the Father, and has kept himself squared away, is capable of entering into the divine power system that doctrine and the leading of the Holy Spirit forms.

When Jesus Christ was here, He was not only God, but He was also man. He was a God-Man. As Man, He acted and lived just as we do, under the same conditions and circumstances and power system. God the Father gave Him, from His earliest days, an intense training in the knowledge of doctrine. He learned the principles of Scripture. And then He gave Him the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide Him, to show him what to use at any particular point in time of the doctrinal principle to guide Him in His life. And that's why Jesus lived the sinless life. And that's why you can do virtually the same thing most of the time – live out of sin, because you have doctrine, and you have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because you're in fellowship with the Spirit of God – you've confessed your own sins.

When I see Christians who do things that are irrational spiritually, or that are irrational in any way in their lives, I know exactly what their problem is. They're out of touch with God the Holy Spirit. They have a lack of doctoral understanding. They're negative to the truth they know. They've turned their backs upon the leading of the Spirit of God. And when they're in that condition, they're out there on their own. They're flapping in the breeze. They're a loose cannon on the deck of their lives. And the devil has a field day with them.

When Christians want to flee from enlightenment spiritually, I know exactly what their problem is. They become negative to a principle of the Word of God, and God the Holy Spirit is pressing on them, and saying, "Don't do this. Change your mind. This is wrong. This is not the attitude you should have. Readjust your life." And after a while, God the Holy Spirit has done His work, and negative volition reaches its end, and finally God says, "Okay, you want it that way?" And He reaches down, and grabs you by the roots of your hair, and He jerks you out of the area of your spiritual enlightenment, and spiritual opportunity. And He sets you down into something that is triviality and degrading.

## Truth

Only the Spiritual Christian, functioning on God's grace system of perception, is capable of entering into the divine power system of doctrine used by our Lord in living His life as a sinless man, and fulfilling God's purpose for His life. The grace system of perception is what we call the system that God has provided for entering into the power of the grace of God. That's just one of those terms that sometimes we make up theologically to convey a theological truth.

### The Belt of Truth

One of the ways the Bible conveys that concept is in Ephesians 6:14, where Paul, in describing the various parts of the Roman soldier's armor, said, "Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth." Here it is referred to as "the belt of truth." The word "truth here" in Ephesians refers to God's viewpoint as it is found recorded in Scripture concerning: matters of life, and matters of eternity; matters of heaven, and matters of hell; and, matters of sin and matters of righteousness. That's truth. It's the Bible that determines what is truth.

Satan, the great liar, has filled his world with human viewpoint distortions about life and in eternity. Satan is a great liar, and Satan has propelled and promoted certain lies.

One of the things I'll be doing on our campout to Galveston with our older clubs is to introduce them to some of the all-time great lies of the devil, so that they will be alerted to what those lies are, and they will not be taken off-guard because somebody who is a friend of theirs, that they like a lot, mouths this lie. As soon as it comes out of their mouth, they're going to recognize it for what it is, and they're going to move away from it.

Truth is the opposite of what Satan has to say. It is the capacity of Satan to lie that brought sin into our personal existence. The reason you and I are born with the propensity to sin (a sin nature) is because Adam and Eve were foolish enough to give up their perfect life with God, and their perfect environment, to listen to a lie of the devil. Well, it's a lot easier for people to do that now that they're already inclined to do evil. And don't doubt for one moment that you are spiritually dead to begin with. Therefore, you are totally blind to what is spiritual reality. And don't sit there with your high IQ and try to reason your way to a conclusion in these matters. The only way you're going to come to a truth conclusion (and truth is reality) is when you accept what the Bible has to say about it.

This belt of truth is obtained through the grace system of perception. God will teach any believer without limit His divine viewpoint. He will give you no restrictions on your grasp of categories of doctrinal truth. One Christian does not have more capacity for learning doctrine than another. It's a grace system. Grace makes us all equal. So, everybody is equally capable of going to the highest degree of learning of the knowledge of the Word of God, to the greatest deaths of the grace of God with the Spirit of God. Human merit and ability are not factors in this.

## The Grace System of Perception

The grace system of perception consists of certain elements which God has provided for us, first of all. We have to know what the system includes before we can talk to you about how to use it.

### A Completed Bible

First of all, we have a completed Bible. What we have in Scripture is finished. When John put his quill down, and put the last dot on that parchment, on the island of Patmos, in the book of the Revelation, was all over. Nothing more was to be added. All the revelation that God has for us for time to carry us into eternity had been made. And the Word of God is very explicit that we do have the Word of Truth. We do have the Word of God in its completed form with the Old and New Testaments.

So, when Joseph Smith of the Mormons comes along and says that he has another testament from God, you know right off, it's a bunko operation. You know right off that he is a false prophet, and he has written something that has deceived, up to now, as of today, something like 15 million people.

#### Inspiration

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching; for reproof; for correction; and, for training and righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." All scripture is inspired by God. The Greek word there for "inspired" means "God-breathed: "theopneustos" (theh-op'-nyoo-stos). So, this Scripture tells us that all that we have in the Bible came from God. The information comes from Him. All the writers of the Bible got their information from God. It was breathed out of the Spirit of God into the mentality of the writers. They did not make up these things on their own. We do not have here the products of human wisdom.

2 Peter 1:20-21 adds this: "But know this, first of all: that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." No declaration of God that has been recorded in Scripture was recorded by an act of the human will alone. It says that men were moved by God. The Greek word "phero" (fer'-o) ("carried forth"), is behind the single English word "moved." It is a word that we use when we talk about a sailboat being pushed across the water by the wind in its sails. That's exactly the picture here. These men were born along. They were pushed by the Holy Spirit.

So, these two Scriptures tell us two things: the information in the Bible came from God; and, it was recorded in writing by the supervision of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, everything that is written, to the very word in the original writings, is absolutely perfect. It is the true Word of God. That is a great reality.

#### Verbal Plenary Inspiration

Now, nobody in this room, or anywhere else in the world, deserves this record of spiritual phenomena called Bible doctrine – the true facts of life in the Old and New Testaments have been produced by the Holy Spirit, Who revealed the information to the human authors, and then guided them in accurately recording it: yes, recording it within the context of their personalities; yes, recording it within the context of the level of their education; and, yes, recording it within the level of their vocabulary style. The fisherman boys like Peter, James, and John spoke very simple common Greek language. But an educated doctor like Luke writes with very sophisticated Greek. It's all common Greek of the time, but there is a distinct difference. You can tell by the writers; by the language; by the style; and, by the words that Luke would use over against the words that John would use. But every one of the words, that each of them uses, is accurately the word of the Spirit of God. That's why we believe in *verbal* inspiration as well as *plenary* – the whole Bible being accurately inspired.

Furthermore, the books of the Bible have been preserved by God from those original manuscripts in spite of much demonic effort over the centuries to destroy them. It is today the role of the liberal minister to try to destroy as much of the Bible as he can by distortions and reinterpretation. But the Scriptures that we have, have been accurately conveyed to us. Now, this is a great grace – for us to have completed revelation from God. We don't deserve it. It's a grace factor, and it's absolutely essential for our survival. If we don't have the Bible, we have nothing. We don't know anything.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, that you have probably heard about – scrolls which were written, and then hidden in clay jars out in the desert near the Dead Sea: up in the hills; and, up in caves. And these scrolls contained the Old Testament. When that Arab boy pitched a rock into one of those caves. And I've stood below that cave and looked up into it. And when he pitched that rock trying to scare his sheep out to get them down, and he heard this clack of a broken pot, his curiosity caused him to climb up there, and lo and behold, there are these pots – one of them broken by his rock. And there he finds these scrolls, and on them they find a record of the Old Testament. And when they examine the quality of the parchment, they find that this manuscript is 1,000 years earlier than any other Hebrew manuscript in existence at the time. And that happened in our lifetime.

Well, what do you think the scholars did? The first thing they wanted to do was to look at those scrolls, and compare to the modern Hebrew Bible we have today. And they found it to be precisely the same. That's how careful the Jews were in hand-copying the Scriptures, and transmitting it. Why were they that careful? Because God, the Holy Spirit saw it to it that the Scriptures which He inspired in the first place were transmitted and communicated in exact careful manner. The same is true of the New Testament. We have more manuscripts about the New Testament than about any ancient document in the world – far, far, far more. Therefore, we have a very accurate comparison so that we know very precisely such that we have practically only a half-page of "a's" or "but's" or "and's" that we're not sure about in the whole New Testament. We have a completed Bible. And it has been the production of God. Therefore, we have the starting point of producing a grace system by which we can grasp spiritual things.

### The Local Church

The second thing that God provided in this system is the local church. The local church began, of course, on the same day that the invisible body of Christ began. Acts 2:4 records that for us: "And they (the Christians) who were gathered together (in that upper room) were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." Here it says that they were filled with the Spirit.

Something else also happened on that day, which is not recorded in that place. But later on, when Peter reviews what happened that day in Acts 11:15-17, upon the occasion of his telling the Gentiles of the household of Cornelius the gospel, seven years after Pentecost, gentiles had not been saved, only Jews were being saved. And, lo and behold, seven years after Pentecost, Peter is sent to Cornelius, a godly man who is a student of the Old Testament Scriptures, and who wanted to know about the truth about God's provision of salvation. Peter was sent to him after he was told: "Don't cast these people off. You are to accept them. And to Peter's utter surprise, they began to do something that marked a factor that had been on the day of Pentecost. So, Peter knew that the same thing happened to the Gentiles. They were part of the same body that had been brought together with the Jews on that day.

Acts 11:15-17: "And as I began (to speak to the household of Cornelius, that is), the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as he did upon us at the beginning (on the day of Pentecost). And I remember the words of the Lord – how he used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" So from this scripture, we know that they were not only filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were baptized. Baptism happens only once. Filling happens many times – every time you confess your known sins and you're back in touch with God: "If God therefore gave to them (that is, to these Gentiles) the same gift (the baptism of the Holy Spirit), as he gave to us also, after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" And today we have the visible expression of this which happened on the day of Pentecost, when Christians were fused together into one body: the body of Christ. It has an invisible expression, but it has a visible expression also in the local church.

So, the local church never existed before the day of Pentecost. None of us deserve a local church organization provision. Yet, it is essential if we're going to learn doctrine, because here is where you're going to get it. You'll read books, and you'll get it there. You'll listen to tapes, and you certainly will get it there (if they're good tapes). But the best place (the main place – the historical place) for the learning of doctrine is right here in the local church. And that's what is supposed to be given to you. That is what you have a right to get. And if you're in some wacko, rinky-tink local church that's giving you inspiration, and challenge, and sweetness and light, then get out of it. And find yourself a place where your soul is fed, or you are going to come to disaster. It will be inevitable.

This local church operation is going to exist from now to the rapture. The primary reason for the local church is to enable Christians to secure this belt of truth. It is provided in different ways as it is here at Berean church in a variety of different ways, in the different ministries we have, but they're all focused on one thing: giving you the belt of truth. What churches often do is provide secondary trivial things today for their members. Now, the sheep don't know any better, so they go along with being fleeced. The church is providing them with all kinds of excitement; social life; activities; and, programs, and they think, "Gee, isn't that a fun wonderful place to go. All the people there are so sweet, and so friendly, and so nice, and it's going to take you straight into heaven as a Christian, just as poor as a hound dog, with no rewards – nothing for you to expect.

#### The Pastor-Teacher

The local church is the place for you to be fed spiritually. And it's done through the fact that each local church has one single elder. He's called the pastor-teacher in Ephesians 4:12. And he teaches his congregation of sheep in a group so that they, in privacy, may listen, and they may agree or disagree. They may go positive or negative.

#### The HICEE Technique

It is his duty to teach them via the HICEE technique. The HICEE technique is a procedure that is the result of how he studies; how he learns the Word of God; and, how he examines the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures to come to church and tell you what is in there.

#### Hermeneutics

He has to know Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is principles of interpretation. One of the basic hermeneutical principles he has to understand is the one that Bishop Righter does not: literal interpretation of scripture. If you do not interpret the Scripture literally, you cannot know what it says, and you're making it up on your own.

#### Isagogics

Secondly, you must have Isagogics. You must take into account the background of the time. How did the people live? What were their customs? So, when you read a Scripture, you read it against the background of the culture.

#### Categories

Next, you must have Categories. He should stop once in a while and summarize for you the doctrine of the deity Christ; the doctrine of the blood of Christ; the doctrine of the hypostatic union; the doctrine of the "kenosis;" the doctrine of death; the doctrine of crying; etc. – all these doctrines that are in Scripture: to bring them all together so that you have a frame of reference.

#### Etymology

Next, he must study Etymology. He has to look up the meaning of the words in the original language, and know what they meant, and what they implied.

#### Exegesis

Next, he must have Exegesis. He must know the grammatical structure to put it all together, so that he knows what the Bible is saying. You cannot get that just from the English Bible. But the more frame of reference you have, the more the English Bible can be read by you with great understanding. In time, you'll grasp a great deal of it. But there are some things that you will never see in English that are only in the original languages. People who read it there could grasp it. To you, it is that pastor-teacher's duty to inform you.

Now, no Christian merits this kind of a provision, and I can guarantee you that demons do everything they can to belittle the absolute need for it. They will tell our children to do everything else under the sun, and to want to go to any other kind of church where there's fun and games and all kinds of things that are going to rob them of their right to be taught the Word of God by this technique. You don't need to go to church to be complimented on how wonderful you are. You already know that. And you believe it. You don't have to go to church to be told to love yourself. You already do that. And some of you can never stand without having your arms folded around yourself, hugging yourself, even when you stand. What you need is to be put downwind of yourself, so that you will understand yourself as God smells you, and as God understands, so that you can become a fragrant odor to Him, instead of a disorder to Him. And thus all is put right.

It is the pastor-teacher who teaches in public, and you may go negative or positive. You will not get much of the Word of God on your own. And when you have a lazy, incompetent, uninformed pastor-teacher, then things are going to be pretty bad for you.

The technique for the exercise of this gift is a monologue. It's not a dialog. There are very limited times when you can have a little Bible class: "You tell me what you think, I'll tell you what you what I think." You sit there, and you have a scripture. And someone says, "Now, what do you think this Scripture means?" And someone else says, "Well, I think the Scripture means this." And someone else says, "No, I think the Scripture means this." And after you've had a whole Sunday school class, you walk out, and you don't know anything except that nobody knows anything about it. Nothing. Everything is what somebody thinks, and you've shared your mutual ignorance. Isn't that fun?

How much nicer it is to come and walk out of church and say, "Boy, that's what God thinks. A little piece of my little gray cells now have been transformed into the gray cells of God. I think like He does on that subject. Now I know something. Just let some clown (one of my peers) come along and try to deceive me on that subject. I'll know how to deal with that yo-yo." This is your right. This is a question of the Word of God.

Now, sometimes you do need clarification. Once in a while, I've had people right in the middle of a church service say, "Well, does that mean . . . ?" It is somebody who has really been listening, and all of a sudden they've been hit with a big question, and they just explode the question. That's okay. I'm not going to get upset. We'll clarify that. But it is not a discussing back and forth. It is somebody who knows the truth because he has spent the time learning the truth that can convey it to you, and who has the gift to be able to convey spiritual things. Not everybody can teach spiritual things. It has to be done by this method.

Now, the two basic things are here: a completed Bible; and, a local church organization. Now we begin to get personal. Now we begin to get where you come into the picture, and the great responsibility that rests upon you as a member of God's family, and of the role that you play today, which no Jew of the Old Testament ever had to play. The Jew always had a priest to go to. Today, there are no priests to go to. Now how do you function? Now how do you deal with your life? Now how do you deal with issues between you and God? We'll pick it up there next time.

Our Father, we thank You for this Your Word. And we thank You for having provided us with the fact that the Bible is the truth, and therefore the Bible is to be believed, and those who wish to go to heaven may believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will be saved. That is the simple truth. That is axiomatic. That cannot be denied. It can only be rejected and not accepted. And the consequences will be a life in eternity in the lake of fire.

How we thank You that grace has preserved us from that, and grace has enabled us to come into the enlightenment of Your Word. We thank You for this grace system of perception. We thank You for the completed Scripture. We thank You for this book that has no errors in it, and has been accurately transmitted and preserved down to our very day. We thank You for the fact that You have provided us with a local church organization, structured to take the Scripture now, and transmitted to us so that we may, from there, grow into spiritual maturity, and carry our responsibility in serving You, and fulfilling the mission for which we were conceived at some point in time. We thank You for our calling, and we thank You for the means to carry it out.

Bless the word to our minds, and give us a positive response to it. In Christ's name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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