



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XIX  
Issue 475

## Another Look at "Bible Study"

### The Misuse of II Timothy 2:15 and the Abuse of Christ's Body

Part 4 of 4

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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

Really, think about it: can you even imagine Paul addressing lost pagans and never even reciting a passage from Scripture? If we had such an opportunity ourselves, many of us would surely believe that we were unfaithful and negligent if we "failed" to use as much of the Bible as we possibly could.



every fact he reads or hears. Trust me, you want this man on your team if you are doing trivia night.

Let's say that Joel is so gifted and has memorized much of the Bible – being able to recite it word for word with its location. Tom, on the other hand, struggles with his memory, and only after much effort does he know even a few passages and where to find them.

Not that sharing the Scriptures is never to be done with the lost, for surely Paul did; but maybe we should learn a little something from Paul here, and not make our conversations with the lost such a rote and quote of Scripture. Maybe, like Paul, we simply should seek to find a place of identification with them – in something that they know and understand – something that is in their frame of reference – something that is important to them; just as he did with their idol to the "Unknown God," and their heathen poetry.

Maybe we should learn to talk to our "Athenians" about sports, movies and other cultural and social interests that they may have, and in these things interpret a divine meaning in life, just as Paul did with the people in his day.

#### Scripture Memorization

Some people have been gifted with amazing memories. I have a cousin who seems to remember nearly

Which has a greater grasp of truth? Joel, or Tom? Which one loves God and His Word more? Can this be measured by memorization alone? No.

Surely the memorization of Scripture is a worthy thing, but we need to be careful not to make mandates where God Himself hasn't.

One Bible passage is used to insist that Scripture memorization be done:

*Your Word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You (Psalm 119:11).*

(see Study, page 4203)

Another Look at "Bible Study" (part 4).....	4201
When Did the Body of Christ Start? .....	4204
Our Mailbox.....	4206



## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XIX, No. 475 – January 13, 2015

This free weekly electronic 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 law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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 freedom from 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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*STUDY (continued from front page)*

The first thing we note in this verse is the lack of any mandate. This is not a *commandment*, but merely a personal *confession* of the Psalmist.

Second, a closer look shows that there is *no* reference to rote memorization either. It is mere assumption that hiding God's Word in one's heart can be accomplished only by memorization.

Rotherham's translation brings to bear the meaning of the passage:

*In my heart, have I treasured what Thou hast said, to the end I may not sin against Thee.*

Herein lies the true issue: a treasuring of God's Word – a valuing of His Truth. Some may indeed express this through memorization.

*"The Walking Bible"*

When I was young an evangelist came through our town, holding a city-wide "crusade." His name was Jack Van Impe. He is known as "The Walking Bible." In fact, he had a biography with that title. It's a reference to the amount of Scripture he has memorized. According to his website, he has spent about 35,000 hours memorizing 14,000 verses.<sup>1</sup>

What, if any, conclusion can we make? Does this mean that he has more truth than other teachers? That he loves, and is more faithful to, God and His Word? That he sins less? – *"that I might not sin against Thee."*

**Being a Berean**

*The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea: who coming there went into the synagogue of the Jews. 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. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:10-12).*

I used to cite this passage regularly as a companion to II Timothy 2:15. The constant appeal was to "Be a Berean!" The concept is so popular that I have known organizations and periodicals that even have used "Berean" proudly as a part of their name.<sup>2</sup>

Now, as I think of it, if it was not so serious a misuse, it would almost be amusing. Reading the passage carefully, let us note a few things that may get overlooked:

- There is *no instruction* anywhere in this passage to "Be a Berean";
- There is *no instruction* anywhere in this passage to "Search the Scriptures";
- There is *no instruction* anywhere in this passage to "Study";
- This is an account of what happened in a *Jewish synagogue*;
- Those who searched the Scriptures were *unbelievers*.

As was his custom, Paul went to the Jewish synagogue when he arrived at the town of Berea. This was not only the divine principle – *"to the Jew first"* – that was central to his Acts ministry, but had the added benefit of being the ideal place to begin his teaching. After all, the synagogue in Berea was the sure place to find the Hebrew Scriptures and those who could read them.

When in a new city Paul's first stop was to see those who had possession of, and could read the Scriptures. Not only that, but the Jewish leaders were there; it was the place of their *vocation*. This is why, when Paul read to and taught them from the Scriptures, they had both the time and ability to *"search the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* After all, they *could read* and it was their *job*.

The Jewish leaders at Berea's synagogue *"were more noble"* than the leaders at Thessalonica's synagogue, because they actually *"received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* As a result, many of

(see *STUDY*, page 4206) ►

1. For a frame of reference, the "New Testament" has some 7,956 verses.

2. Berean Bible Society, Berean Searchlight, Berean Publishing Trust, Berean Expositor, Berean Bible Church, Berean Ministries, Berean Advocate, etc.

# When Did the Body of Christ Start?

by — André Sneidar

The answer to this crucial question is important to understand, not for any date-setting, but to comprehend exactly what God is doing today in this dispensation of grace and what He plans to accomplish in the coming ages. Sadly, there is much confusion by people who don't understand dispensational Bible study, or "*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*" (II Timothy 2:15). The result is the mixing of law and grace, Paul's gospel and the Jew's gospel, trying to make them all one conglomerate mesh but instead ending up with one big confounding mess. It's like trying to mix oil and water: no matter how hard you shake it up, it never sticks. They are incapable of meshing together, and weren't meant to be integrated.



changed his name from Saul to Paul, and he began writing his epistles to the Body of Christ after that point. It is interesting to note also that Saul is a distinctly Jewish name, while Paul is a Greek, or gentile name.

I Corinthians, which was written, according to E.W. Bullinger, about 57 A.D.<sup>2</sup> is the earliest of Paul's epistles that mentions the "Body" (chapter 12).

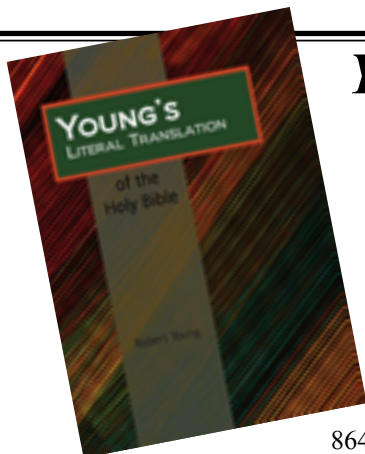
Paul had a "dual" ministry in Acts: to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile (*i.e.*, "as his manner was," Acts 17:2). This ministry was God's appeal to Israel on a national basis to entreat them to accept His work on their behalf by Jesus Christ, after their rejection of God in the "Old Testament" and His Son during His earthly ministry. We find 3 pronouncements by Paul that, after the Jews' refusal to believe his message concerning Jesus Christ, he would go to the gentiles and they would believe him (13:46; 18:6; 28:28). After the final pronouncement he is not recorded as ministering to the Jews (in the national sense). Sir Robert Anderson makes a crucial observation that is helpful regarding the transitional nature of the Acts period:

We must recognize the intensely Jewish character of the Pentecostal dispensation. The Jerusalem Church

We know that the Body of Christ couldn't have started before Paul, because he alone is unique in using that term ("Body of Christ," or "body" in reference to it). So it's good reasoning to think that it was not earlier than Acts 13 (about 46 A.D.<sup>1</sup>). This is when the Lord "separated" Barnabas and Saul "*for the work*" to which He was calling them (essentially, you can view this as Paul's preparation for his ministry in the dispensation of grace in which we now live, in which Paul revealed the "mystery" which had not been known nor revealed by anyone before him), and

1. E.W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Appendix*, #180.

2. *Ibid.*



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was Jewish. Their Bible was the Jewish Scriptures. The Jewish temple was their house of prayer and common meeting-place. Their beliefs and hopes and words and acts all marked them out as Jews.

My contention is that the Acts, as a whole, is the record of a temporary and transitional dispensation in which blessing was again offered to the Jews and again rejected.<sup>3</sup>

The final proclamation by Paul in Acts 28 is seen as God's final dealings with the nation of Israel, and the interjection of the dispensation of the mystery until the resumption of the prophetic time clock when God again takes up His work with His people Israel as preparation for their earthly rule under Christ. We learn from Paul, though, that God has a much grander plan in mind – namely, the reconciliation of ALL of His creation – and that it was necessary for Israel to be brought low in order that “*He might have mercy on ALL*” (Romans 11:32). *This* is the mystery of which Paul speaks in his post-Acts epistles,<sup>4</sup> which commences with his announcement of God's work *now* to reveal this mystery through Paul at the end of Paul's last epistle (Romans) in the Acts period:

*Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith* (Romans 16:25-26).

In I Corinthians 12 Paul clearly says that the body is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, identified and placed as such by God's spirit. We see also the same language used in Paul's post-Acts epistles, especially Ephesians.

To refuse Paul's authority as our apostle for this age is to refute God's appointment of him for the establishment and building of the Body of Christ.

If you are to have a place in God's program for today during the dispensation of grace, and have a much

3. Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), *The Silence of God*, page 56.

4. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, Titus.

higher calling in the celestial realms one day to rule and reign as part of God's royal family, then you must accept Paul's designation as your apostle for today, believing the gospel that only he, as commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, preached. ■

MAILBOX (continued from page 4206)

hopefully change the faces of how they may portray our God. – **FL**

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Keep up your work with Daily Goodies, they are really helpful. – **Australia**

Responses from Others

You have helped me in my life and have helped to open my eyes. – **NY**

Within the past several months my eyes, heart and understanding have been opened to the reconciliation of the world. – **FL**

I thank God for you always and pray that He will continue to open your eyes to the wonders of our Riches in Christ Jesus our Lord. – **WA**

Thank you for being such a wellspring of knowledge and insight into Scripture. – **Canada** ■

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*STUDY (continued from front page)*

them (and accompanying Jew and Gentile proselytes) believed.

The fact remains, however, that searching the Scriptures is indeed a very noble thing, but not a burden of command to be laid on the back of those who lack God-given ability or passion.

### Reading Through the Bible in a Year

There is a popular regimen in certain parts of Christendom: reading through the Bible in a year. They even have special guides and Bibles to assist you in the task. It is a yearly exercise with which many are burdened. Some religious organizations will issue a “certificate” for those professing accomplishment of such a task. How is that working out for them? Are folks coming to the truth? Do they have the “*hearing of faith*”? Are they growing in the realization of Him? Not necessarily.

There is nothing wrong with reading the Bible, and if one is so personally motivated to read “from cover to cover” through all of the history of Israel’s kings and their long lists of genealogies – it no doubt *could* be a good thing. Yet to burden others with a duty not commissioned to them by God is a disservice to and an abuse of the members of Christ’s Body.

### CONCLUSIONS

Our desire has been to clarify the truth regarding “Bible study,” as well as to provide a greater appreciation for our place on the stage of human history, thus giving us a sense of grateful indebtedness for our access to the Scriptures and the tools in which to study them.

We also trust that this will bring about humble thanksgiving as well as validation of the teaching ministry, while removing the unnecessary burden placed on many by the misuse of Scripture passages.

Finally, we are reminded that passages of Scripture *never* should have meaning to the modern man that they did not to the contemporary of its authors. ■



Responses from our 3-part video series:

#### [Another Look at Bible Study](#)

I finished the last of your *Another Look at Bible Study* talk. Wow! You continue to bless me with messages that relieve the burden. The church taught me to study and my personality took to that lesson. It has stressed me out for a long time. ... Like most in the Body, I have a long history with Christendom. I am amazed how much junk there is for our Father to remove. – *IL*

I wanted to let you know that I was encouraged, and enjoyed seeing your 3-part video on Bible study. I appreciated how you put things in perspective and apply this to believers. Many things resonated with my heart during the series. ...

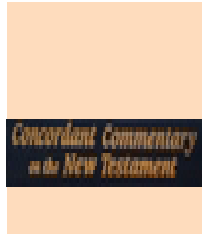
As a young man around 21 years old God opened my eyes to see that He was real. So many things have changed in me since then. Now 55 years old, the faith he gave me has never left. Thank you again for helping me to know Him better. – *Email*

Your talks on *Bible Study* have helped me shed major bondage. Thank you for your good teaching. You have no idea how much your work means to me. I’m honored to call you a brother. – *MI*

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(see *MAILBOX*, page 4205)



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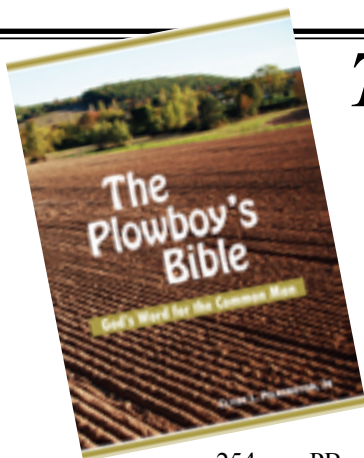


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