



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 37
Issue 920

Things I Misunderstood

Part 4

4 Things I Misunderstood About the Rich Man & Lazarus

Personal Reflections by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Key Points:

The Rich Man and Lazarus is a parable, not an actual account.....7777
The purpose of parables was not to make thing easier to understand but to conceal truth from the multitudes..... 7778
The details in this parable disagree with the plain teaching of

Scripture..... 7779
The dead are really dead, not alive in some other place. 7780
This parable was specifically for the Pharisees - turning their own religious traditions against them..... 7780

As I began to learn about the infinite broadness of God's love and grace, I had to re-evaluate many passages of Scripture that I thought that I understood, including the story of *the Rich Man and Lazarus*.



There were two things that I did not understand about parables.

First, the *only* way that Jesus spoke to the *multitudes* was in parables.

All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, and apart from a parable He spoke nothing to them (Matthew 13:34 BSV²)

Sadly, *the Rich Man and Lazarus* had been where I had learned much of my information about the important themes of death and the after-life.

Over many years of study, I came to have a completely different view of the of *the Rich Man & Lazarus*, one that has brought me peace and rest.

#1 – I Misunderstood the CONTEXT of the *Rich Man & Lazarus*

For many years I had misunderstood the actual context of *the Rich Man and Lazarus*. It is actually a part of a large series of *parables* found in the Book of Luke. In fact, Luke contains the largest number of parables of any book of the New Testament: 30.¹

1. See "Parables in the Book of Luke" in this issue of the *Bible Stu-*

I had been taught that since Christ did not say *the Rich Man and Lazarus* was a parable, that it wasn't *one*. But, since parables were Jesus' only way of communicating with the multitudes, it is not necessary

dent's Notebook. (last page).

2. The *Bible Student's Version* is a continuing, composite translation of Scripture. This provisional version is the base text of the *Bible Student's Notebook*. The BSV is not intended as a replacement of one's personal study Bible, but is a text designed to assist in the accuracy, clarity, simplicity and crystallization of personal study.

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for any of the parables of Christ to be specifically stated to be so.

Second, parables were employed by our Lord to obscure the truth.

Listen to Christ's own explanation as to why He spoke in parables (Matthew 13:10-15):

Then the disciples came up and asked Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

He answered them, "Because the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them. ... For this reason I speak to them in parables, because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

You will listen and listen, yet never understand; and you will look and look, yet never perceive. For this people's heart has grown callous; their ears are hard of hearing, and

they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn back-- and I would cure them." (HCSB)

I had been taught that parables were illustrations of spiritual truths, utilized in an effort to make them *simple* and *understandable*; that Christ used parables to clarify His teachings.

However, as we can see from the Book of Matthew, this is *not* the teaching of Scripture. Instead, we learn that the purpose of parables was not to *reveal* anything to the multitudes, but to *conceal* truth from them. Christ specifically spoke ambiguously and confusingly to the multitudes. This was in keeping with the principle that He taught His disciples:

You may not be giving that which is holy to curs, nor yet should you be casting your pearls in front of hogs, lest at some time they shall be trampling them with their feet and, turning, they should be tearing you (Matthew 7:6 CV).

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- 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);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. 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."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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I would come to understand that the story of *the Rich Man & Lazarus* is a parable; its purpose not to make things clear, but to make them obscure.

#2 - I Misunderstood the DETAILS of *the Rich Man & Lazarus*

Upon further consideration, I would come to realize that I had failed to ask the most basic of questions concerning the passage – questions that would have assisted me in gaining a proper orientation regarding the passage.

- Where else in Scripture do we read of “*Abraham’s Bosom*”?
- Does the passage say anywhere that the Rich Man was *wicked* or *unsaved*?
- Does the passage say anywhere that Lazarus was *saved* or *righteous*?
- If, under Israel’s program, the *righteous* are not forsaken, nor do their offspring beg for bread (Psalm 37:25), does this mean that the beggar Lazarus was *unrighteous*? (:20)
- What criteria was there for going to hell or paradise? (:25)

... Remember that you in thy lifetime received good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented.

- So, does this mean that, if someone receives “good things” in his lifetime, he can expect to be tor-

mented in the next life? (:25)

#3 – I Misunderstood the FRAMEWORK of the Rest of Scripture

Because I had misunderstood *the Rich Man and Lazarus*, making it the basis of my doctrine on death and afterlife, I had disregarded the entire framework of the rest of Scripture regarding these doctrines. In fact, after a thorough investigation of what the rest of Scripture taught on death and the resurrection, I realized that the plain teaching of Scripture actually refutes what I had been taught regarding this passage.

Stepping back from the traditional teaching, I could see that this portion of Scripture is *not* one from which to teach doctrine. If I obtained my doctrine concerning death and the state of the dead from this passage, I would be denying the rest of Scripture concerning the subject.

What makes this so significant is that the parable contradicts the clear teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament clearly teaches us that in death there is not consciousness.

The dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

The dead do not praise You (Isaiah 38:18).

There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:10).



The Administration of the Secret

A Comprehensive Compilation

308 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under “*Compilations.*”

The Secret Administration, revealed through Ephesians and Colossians, is characterized and empowered by the dispensing of transcendent grace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7; 3:2). Now, believing Gentiles are “*no longer guests and sojourners,*” as they were in the Pentecostal and Readjustment Administrations, but are “*fellow-citizens of the saints and members of God’s family*” (Ephesians 2:19). This outstanding work includes 45 chapters, by 17 authors, spanning nearly 200 years. Author’s include: Oscar M. Baker, Tom L. Ballinger, J. R. Caldwell, E. H. Clayton, J.J.B. Coles, John Essex, J.H. Evans, H.W. Fry, Vladimir Gelesnoff, William B. Hallman, Richard Holden, John H. Kessler, A.E. Knoch, Adlai Loudy, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., and Charles H. Welch.

His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish (Psalm 146:4).

So, as is commonly understood, *the Rich Man and Lazarus* denies that the dead are actually dead, that somehow, death is not really death, but life in some other form and in some other place. This is the teaching of the immortality of the soul – a tenet of paganism.

Does this passage, as commonly understood, confirm Satan's declaration that "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4) but really continue to live on in some other form, in some other place? Or are the dead in fact truly dead, awaiting resurrection?

#4 – I Misunderstood the MEANING of the *Rich Man & Lazarus*

It is important to know that the terminology associated with the parable of *the Rich Man and Lazarus* is **NOT** language found elsewhere in the Scriptures, but instead from Jewish tradition. The Babylonian Talmud was the central source of the traditions of the Jewish religious fathers, which essentially superseded God's written Word among Israel's religious zealots. The Talmud was the context for Christ's solemn words that they were:

Making the Word of God of no effect by your tradition (Mark 7:13).

Invalidating the Word of God by your tradition (CV).

Cancelling the Word of God by your tradition (REB).

Setting aside the Word of God for your tradition (YLT).

Revok[ing] God's word by your tradition (HCS).

Making void the Word of God by your tradition (ASV).

Nullify the Word of God by your traditions (TCNT).

This is exactly what the common interpretation of the parable of *the Rich Man and Lazarus* does: it invalidates, cancels, sets aside, revokes, voids and nullifies the truth of God's Word regarding death, the state of the dead, and the vital importance of resurrection.

While *not* found elsewhere in the Scriptures, these terms and beliefs are prevalent in Jewish tradition:

"carried by angels,"

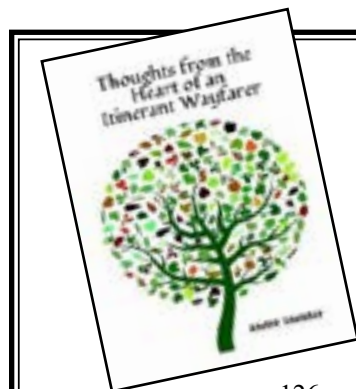
"Abraham's bosom,"

"the great chasm"

Thus, it is Jewish fables and the Babylonian Talmud, **NOT** the Old Testament Scriptures, which are the broader context of Jesus' words in the parable. To validate this statement, we read that, before Christ gave the parable,

The Pharisees ... were hearing all these things, and were openly sneering at Him (:14, REB).

This parable was *specifically* for these Pharisees, utilizing the language of their own religious traditions, turning the tables on them.



Thoughts from the Heart of an Itinerant Wayfarer

by — André Sneidar

This is a unique collection of 33 articles and a selection of quotes from André Sneidar, Executive Editor of *Bible Student's Press* and *Bible Student's Notebook*. Since 1988 he has closely co-labored with Clyde Pilkington in a multifaceted ministry.

126 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under "Other Authors."

Make no mistake about it, the Pharisees knew emphatically that *they* were the rich man “*who was clothed in purple and fine linen*” (:14), as these were the emblems of Israel’s ruling class of kings and priests³ – symbolizing their royal priesthood.⁴

... *You religion scholars, you Pharisees! Frauds!*

3. “... the purple ... and the fine linen” (Exodus 28:5); “a mantle of fine linen and purple” (Esther 8:15 REB).
4. “a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6); “a royal priesthood” (I Peter 2:9).

Here are some observations taken from our compilation work [The Rich Man & Lazarus](#) (see [order form](#) under “Compilations.”)

“The clothing of the rich man, to which attention is specially called, needs no explanation. The royal purple of the king mingles with the linen garment of the priest. This is what Israel was called out to be, what Israel failed to be, and what Israel will yet be through *grace*: a kingdom of priests to God (Exodus 19:6). ... The purple and the linen recall the garments in which her national place and privilege were laid aside. ... The Pharisee was all too conscious of his robes of purple and fine linen...” – Alan Burns

“The word ‘purple’ describes a cloth which was customarily worn by kings. The kingly claims of our Lord were mocked by clothing Him in purple (John 19:2). The statement that this rich man was clothed in purple points to the fact that an aristocratic class in Israel had assumed the place of kings. They had assumed the authority while disregarding altogether the responsibilities that God had laid on rulers in Israel. ‘*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God*’ (II Samuel 23:3). The ruling class in Israel was tyrannical and oppressive. They were not just, they did not rule in the fear of God, and they lacked entirely the shepherd character that God expected of those who governed His people.

“Fine linen was the garment worn by the priests in Israel. It points to the fact that a clique in Israel controlled the priesthood and had assumed the chief prerogative of the priests, that of teaching the people. ‘*The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat*’ was the Lord’s words concerning them (Matthew 23:2). His words stated a fact, but they do not admit the right of these men to Moses’ seat. They were not called to this seat as Moses had been. He assumed that seat reluctantly, but these men had assumed his seat of their own accord and were determined to hold it. They were self-appointed usurpers, and acted as though their pronouncements were as binding as the revelations God gave to Moses. They taught precepts and bound them on others but would not apply them to themselves. ‘*They say, and do not*’ (Matthew 23:3)” – Otis Q. Sellers

Your lives are roadblocks to God’s Kingdom. You refuse to enter, and won’t let anyone else in either. ... You go halfway around the world to make a convert, but once you get him you make him into a replica of yourselves (Matthew 23:13-15, MSG).

The Real TAKEAWAY from *the Rich Man and Lazarus*

If we would learn *anything* from the parable of *the Rich Man and Lazarus* it is found in this statement:

They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them (:29).

This is the real takeaway from Christ’s words to the Pharisees: not listening to Moses and the prophets prohibits us from understanding the parable.

Another Lazarus

Interestingly enough, in John 11, another Lazarus is mentioned in the Gospel accounts. This time it is not in a parable, but an account of one of Christ’s greatly beloved friends (:3, 5, 11, 36) and most memorable miracles of resurrection.

Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha, died and was **NOT** “*carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom,*” but rather, he was placed in a tomb. For when Jesus arrived in Bethany, where Lazarus had lived, we learn that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

*Him having been four days already **in the tomb*** (:17, YLT).

(see **MISUNDERSTOOD**, next page)

The Pathway of Faith

— Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921)

Studies from Genesis 12-50. This writing presents the spiritual careers of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. God’s dealings with these four patriarchs are rich in lessons of permanent value. With exquisite, artless simplicity they demonstrate the frailty of our frame, accentuate the gentle forbearance, and illustrate the inexhaustible grace of our heavenly Father.

See [order form](#) under “Gelesnoff.”

80 pp., PB

Parables in the Book of Luke

compiled by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Luke is the longest book in the “New Testament,”¹ and contains the largest number of parables: 30.

Luke 5:36, *The New Cloth & Old Garment*
Luke 5:37-39, *New Wine into Old Wineskins*
Luke 6:46-49, *The Wise & the Foolish Builders*
Luke 7:41-43, *The Two Debtors*
Luke 8:5-15, *The Sower*
Luke 8:16-18, *The Lamp under a Bushel*
Luke 10:25-37, *The Good Samaritan*
Luke 11:5-8, *The Friend at Night*
Luke 11:21-22, *The Strong Man*
Luke 11:33-36, *The Lamp under a Bushel - Revisited*
Luke 12:16-21, *The Rich Fool*
Luke 12:35-40, *The Faithful Servant & the Evil Servant*
Luke 12:42-48, *The Faithful & Wise Servant*
Luke 13:6-9, *The Barren Fig Tree*
Luke 13:18-19, *The Mustard Seed*
Luke 13:20-21, *The Leaven*

Luke 14:7-14, *The Wedding Feast*
Luke 14:15-24, *The Great Banquet*
Luke 14:25-35, *Counting the Cost*
Luke 15:3-7, *The Lost Sheep*
Luke 15:8-10, *The Lost Coin*
Luke 15:11-32, *The Prodigal Son*
Luke 16:1-13, *The Unjust Steward*
Luke 16:19-31, *The Rich Man & Lazarus*
Luke 17:7-10, *The Unprofitable Servant*
Luke 18:1-8, *The Unjust Judge*
Luke 18:9-14, *The Pharisee & the Publican*
Luke 19:11-27, *The Talents or Minas*
Luke 20:9-19, *The Wicked Husbandmen*
Luke 21:29-33, *The Budding Fig Tree*

Topics:

Major: Parables
Minor: Luke, The Book of

1. Luke contains 1151 verses, the most of any book in the “New Testament.”

MISUNDERSTOOD (continued from previous page)

Where was Lazarus? Well, clearly, he was “*in the tomb*.” In the Scriptures, those who have died are always spoken of as being where their bodies are.

Thus, Jesus asks,

Where have you placed **him**? (:34, CV).

Now let's listen in on the account:

Jesus, groaning, comes to **the tomb**, and it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone”; and his sister Martha said to Him, “**He** already stinks, for **he** has been dead for four days.” ... [But] they took away the stone where the **dead** was laid, and ... with a loud voice [Jesus] cried out, “**Lazarus**, come out”; and **he who died** came out (John 11:38-44, BSV).

When Lazarus died, he was actually dead, and was placed in a grave, and Jesus called for him to *come out* of his grave.

In Scripture death is illustrated by the metaphor of *sleep* – a period of *unconsciousness*. This is why Jesus had earlier told His disciples that,

Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going, there, to awaken **him** out of **sleep** (:11).

Thus, Lazarus died, was buried, and in the grave. Our Lord raised him *out from* the grave. **BSN**

[NOTE: We have an extensive work on this subject, entitled [The Rich Man and Lazarus – The Ultimate Collection](#). This is a compilation of eleven works on the subject and can be found on the [order form](#) under “Compilations.”]

Topics:

Major: Abraham's Bosom; Rich Man and Lazarus
Minor: Death; Parables



Tidbits of Truth #40

“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

The Ephesians “Sonship” Distinction

The Romans 9 “*sonship*” is the exclusive prerogative of “*Israel according to the flesh*,” the Galatians 4 “*sonship*” extends to the spiritual seed of Abraham who are not “*after the flesh*” (:23), but was associated with “*Jerusalem which is above*” (:26). However, the Ephesians “*sonship*” (1:5) has no relationship whatsoever to Abraham or Israel. It has no connection with the promises made to the fathers, it is not founded on an earthly inheritance (allotment). The Ephesians “*sonship*” extends back before the disruption of the world (:4), and extends “*far above*” all heavens (:3). These three “*sonships*” correspond to the three distinct spheres of blessing.

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

No Political Program

[*Excerpt:*] Paul had no political program. The cross put an end to man in the flesh. It assessed the natural man and declared him bankrupt. Bankrupt politically, morally, spiritually, totally. Instead of being a citizen of the world he became a corpse in it: “*I am crucified with Christ.*” As far as the world is concerned the church of God is a cemetery full of nothing but dead men, and men with their names on tombstones do not run for political nominations.

— Alan Burns (1884-1929)

[*Politician? or Paulician?*](#)

The Master Scriptwriter

Our lives are scripted by the Master Scriptwriter. Each page is revealed to us one day, one moment at a time with no peeking ahead. No edits are made, His story line is perfect.

He has included doubt and resistance to His very existence right into the script. Some pages bring admiration by the actors for the story, while some para-

graphs or even chapters bring disdain for Him.

Yet He tells the actors that the story ends well – not for some, but for all the characters – despite their doubts and occasional hatred for the author.

— Mike Owens

The Need for Adjustableness

[*Excerpt:*] Adjustableness on our part is a very important thing with God. Are we adjustable? The whole question is of what God is able to do with us – of determining what God is able to use – of His having a free way to reach His end by our being adjustable.

Many of the Lord’s people stop short at adjusting to the truth. It very often means breaking with something that we have regarded as very important and very precious. We have come to see that, after all, that was only our conception of it. In God’s view that does not occupy the place at all that we had thought it occupied, and it has to be left behind. We have to adjust to something higher and fuller than that, to a more spiritual and heavenly conception of things.

— [T. Austin-Sparks](#) (1888-1971)

A Witness and a Testimony (May 1939)

Misery Transformed Into Joy

Knowing that we were “*born unto trouble*” (Job 5:7, KJV) – or as the CV translates it, “*born to misery*,” and knowing that this is our Father’s current purpose to bring about our ultimate good (Romans 8:28), we are able to find great peace in the midst of all of our brokenness and seemingly adverse circumstances. With the eye of faith we can glory in our “*afflictions*” (Romans 5:3, CV), counting them all “*joy*” (James 1:2), knowing that “*the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us*” (Romans 8:18, CV).

Our current troubles and miseries are transformed into joy in our hearts without any change in our circumstances whatsoever. We are able to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) in the midst of our brokenness and apparent opposing situations knowing that “the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us a transcendently transcendent eonian burden of glory” (II Corinthians 4:17, CV). This is what Paul calls the “joy of faith” (Philippians 1:24), which allows us to become “superexceeding in joy in all our affliction” (II Corinthians 7:5, CV).

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Restrictive System of Doctrines

[Excerpt:] A sectarian, who looks at the Scriptures through a restrictive system of doctrines and opinions, called a creed, is like one who is incarcerated and fettered, and permitted to gaze upon one particular landscape only, from the single window of his gloomy and unwholesome prison.

— Robert Richardson
Cited by John M. Bland in
Men Who Would Be Kings (1995)

Movements and Institutions

[Excerpt:] Institutions never conserve without be-

traying the movements from which they proceed. The institution is static, whereas its parent movement has been dynamic; it confines men within its limits, while the movement had liberated them from the bondage of institutions; it looks to the past, although the movement had pointed forward.

— H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962)
The Kingdom of God in America (1959)

Not Saved by Our Views

Our first views of Christ, as our first views of everything, even in this world, are, and must be more or less imperfect. God knows this, if we forget it. Thank God, we are not saved by our views, but by His grace.

— [Andrew Jukes](#) (1815-1901)
A Letter on the Doctrines of Restitution and Substitution

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: [The Ephesians “Sonship” Distinction:] Ephesians; Secret Administration; Sonship; Spheres, Three [No Political Program:] Government; Politics [The Master Scriptwriter:] Sovereignty [The Need for Adjustableness:] Adjustable [Misery Transformed Into Joy:] Suffering [Restrictive System of Doctrines:] Creeds; Sectarianism [Movements and Institutions:] Institutions; Movements [Not Saved by Our Views:] Believers; Called; Faith; Salvation



Daily Gleanings – Volumes 1 & 2

365 Selections on Scriptural Truths

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Editor

264 pp., PB; 200 authors [See order form](#) 190 pp., PB; 170 authors
under “Clyde L. Pilkington.”



These books contain a collection of gleanings from many different authors, and are intended to be an encouragement to those who are walking on a different path with the Lord – a journey that is “outside of the camp.” Some quotations are from beloved and trusted authors, but more often than not, they are from unusual sources. Sometimes, it is simply amazing how an author can admit in print to some grand truth that their writings and ministries otherwise generally deny. For the authors of these quotes, the truth that is conveyed by them may oddly seem “out of place”; but in some ways, the more unlikely the source, the more amazingly it testifies to the truth – and the fact that it cannot be hidden.

Thanks for your ministry and the time you put into this work. – TX

Interesting, instructive and faith building. – Canada

I love that you have done this for

us. There is no way that we could go through half the amount of material you go through and pull out these tasty morsels. – VA

What a treasured collection! – MI

You have made me aware of authors I didn't even know. – GA

Truly an invaluable resource. – IL

These gleanings are so encouraging! – Kenya