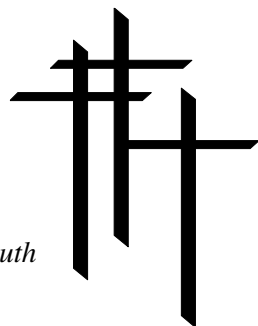


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

Volume 68 No. 1

Winter 2008

NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

By Gregg Bing

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness

which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”

(Philippians 3:1-7)

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines confidence as “self-assurance.” In this third chapter of *Philippians*, the Apostle Paul warns against those who had just such confidence in themselves, that is, in their flesh.

Paul begins this section of the letter with the word, “Finally,” not introducing the conclusion of the letter, but merely a change in focus. He admonishes his readers to “rejoice in the Lord.” The tone of the whole letter is one of joy and rejoicing; here Paul stresses the cause or source of their rejoicing—the Lord. Even in difficult times, “the joy of the Lord is our strength” (Neh. 8:10).

Paul then reiterates a warn-

ing he had given these dear brethren before. The repetition of this key teaching was not grievous to Paul, and was, in fact, needed for their safety and security. Repetition is a key to remembering. People can often recall the names and statistics of their favorite sports teams, the lyrics of popular songs, even the dialogue of current movies because they are repeatedly exposed to this information. Sadly, few people, including many Christians, know the books of the Bible, the names of prominent Bible characters, or even the basic order of key Biblical events (i.e. that Abraham lived before Moses). Just as repetition helps people remember secular information, it is also needed to help learn and understand spiritual truths. Warnings about spiritual dangers, such as temptation, false teaching, and worldliness certainly bear repeating.

“Beware” Paul says, admonishing us to see (be aware) and to discern (be wary). Three warnings are given, but all refer to the same group: the Judaizers, legalistic Jews who insisted that being circumcised and keeping the law were necessary for salvation.

“Beware of dogs!” is Paul’s first warning. *Dogs* was a term

used to describe those who were unholy, unclean, impure. Dogs often do filthy things: returning to their own vomit (2 Pet. 2:22) or licking a beggar’s sores (Luke 16:21). The Jews referred to the Gentiles as *dogs* because of the animalistic behavior associated with their idolatrous worship, including sexual immorality and sacrificing their own children (2 Chron. 28:3).

Paul takes this same term and applies it to these self-righteous Jews who were outwardly religious, but whose hearts were filthy. Jesus pictured the Jewish rulers in this same way in Matthew 23:27-28:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

“Beware of evil workers!” The Judaizers not only had wicked hearts, they were also workers of evil. They appeared moral, even godly, in their words and actions, but their intentions were wicked, though

cloaked in deception. Paul gave a similar warning to the Galatian churches. The Galatian saints had heard Paul preach the gospel of Christ, had believed that Christ died for their sins and rose again, and had been saved by God's grace. But they were being troubled by those preaching a different gospel, a perversion of the gospel of Christ. Paul boldly declared: "If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). These warnings are still relevant today; Paul told Timothy: "Evil men and imposters (seducers) shall grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

"Beware of the mutilation!" Here Paul addresses the Jewish practice of circumcision, a physical sign given to Abraham to remind him and his descendants (Israel) they were to be "cut off" and kept separate from all other nations (Gentiles). This rite was later incorporated into the Mosaic Law. The Jews used the term *uncircumcision* as a derogatory term for the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11).

Paul wrote the Philippian letter after the close of the Acts period, when God was no

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Gregg Bing — Editor

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

Sunday Services:

10:00 AM	Sunday School
11:00 AM	Morning Worship
6:00 PM	Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

Tues.	10:00 AM	Ladies Class
Wed.	7:00 PM	Bible Study

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If so, please notify Grace Bible Church. Be sure to include your name, your old address, and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and reduce the cost of postage.

*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

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longer in covenant relationship with Israel. Paul had begun unveiling the mystery, the revelation of God's plan and purpose for the Church, the Body of Christ, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. The truth of the mystery revealed that through the death of Christ, the law of ordinances (which placed a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile) had been abolished in Christ, meaning it was no longer in operation. The Law could not give life; it was only a shadow of good things to come. Christ and His finished work on the cross provided the substance, the spiritual reality of what the Law merely pictured.

As believers, we are "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). The continued practice of physical circumcision is now nothing more than a mutilation of the flesh, a meaningless religious ritual, much like the Gentiles who cut themselves as part of their idolatrous worship (1 Kings 18:28).

Paul declares "We are the circumcision," the "we" meaning both believing Jews and Gentiles. True circumcision is not an outward work upon the flesh, but an inner work on the heart (Rom. 2:28-29). It is a work of the Spirit, "made with-

out hands;" not mutilating the flesh, but "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11).

The true circumcision are characterized as those who: worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

"Who worship God in the Spirit." Our worship and service (both ideas are implied) of God must be spiritual, not fleshly. This can refer to our human spirit, the part of man which enables us to know God, but, more importantly, it refers to the Holy Spirit which indwells the believer. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Genuine worship of God cannot be accomplished in the flesh, for "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish" (Gal. 5:16-17). The continuing religious practices of the Judaizers were simply the works of their flesh.

"Who rejoice in Christ Jesus." The word *rejoice* literally means to glory or boast. Legalists who seek to lead people back under the Law, "desire to

make a good showing in the flesh” and they make their boast in the flesh (Gal. 6:12-13). Our righteous standing before God has nothing to do with the works of our flesh, for “by the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified” (Gal. 2:16). This led Paul to write:

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal. 6:14)

“Who have no confidence in the flesh.” We must be persuaded, as Paul was, “that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find” (Rom. 7:18). We cannot rely on our flesh to produce anything good, certainly nothing that would please God. Yet, how many people, both then and now, are guilty of this very thing: confidence in the flesh, persuasion that they can be good enough to please God. The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day, particularly the Pharisees, felt this way. “Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness,” they refused to sub-

mit “to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3).

Paul certainly understood this attitude; he was, himself, a Pharisee before he trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. No doubt, this is part of why his heart’s desire was that Israel might come to see what he saw on the road to Damascus (Rom. 10:1-2). Paul uses himself as an example of one who might have “confidence in the flesh.” He almost challenges the Judaizers to compare records. “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so.” Paul then lists the claims he once had “in the flesh.”

“Circumcised the eighth day.” Paul was confident in his strict adherence to the ordinance of circumcision. In contrast to many Jews, who were circumcised later in life (especially those whose families were taken away into captivity), Paul was circumcised when he was eight days old, exactly as prescribed by God.

“Of the stock of Israel.” Paul was confident in his nationality, being part of the commonwealth of Israel, God’s chosen nation. He was not only a descendant of Abraham (the father of that nation), but of Isaac (the promised seed), and of Jacob (whose name was

changed to Israel).

“Of the tribe of Benjamin.”

Paul was confident in his tribal lineage, being descended from Benjamin, a very respected tribe because of its association with the tribe of Judah in the southern kingdom of Judah (where the term “Jew” comes from). The capitol of this kingdom remained in Jerusalem where the temple of God was located.

“A Hebrew of the Hebrews.” Paul was confident in his family purity. He was a Hebrew of Hebrew parents. Following the captivities and dispersion of Israel and Judah into foreign nations, many Hebrew families adopted the culture and language of these nations, some corrupting their lineage through mixed marriages. This was not the case with Paul’s family. They remained true to their Hebrew heritage.

“Concerning the law, a Pharisee.” Paul was confident in his religious affiliation, being trained and then living as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of the Jew’s religion (Acts 16:5). While the Sadducees had become quite liberal in their views (denying the resurrection and the existence of angels or spirits cf. Acts 23:8), the Pharisees remained more fundamental, believing in strict adherence to the

Mosaic Law (though they also stressed the traditions of the elders cf. Matt. 15:1-2).

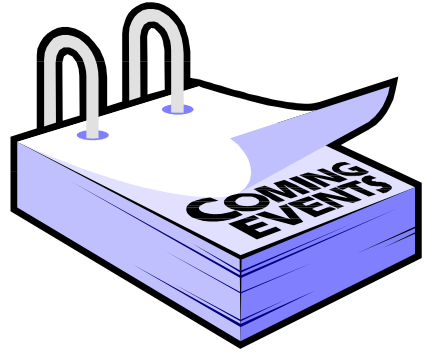
“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.” Paul was confident in his zeal for God (Acts 22:3), being convinced that he must do “many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9-11), so he “persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it” (Gal. 1:13).

“Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Paul was confident that his adherence to the law made him righteous. In his own eyes, in the eyes of his fellow Pharisees, and in the eyes of most Jews, Paul was considered blameless, having done nothing which people could easily find fault with.

However, as Paul traveled to Damascus to continue his persecution of the church, he came face to face with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had once zealously persecuted, was not only Israel’s Messiah, He was the Lord of glory. That very moment, Paul was saved from his sins by the grace of God. Suddenly, all that Paul once held confidence in became worthless to him.

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.” The things that Paul once trusted in and considered great gain: circumcision, nationality, tribal respect, family purity, religious sect, zeal for God, and righteous reputation, he now viewed as loss for the sake of His Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What are you confident in for your salvation? Are you relying upon your own goodness or your own good works to attain a righteous standing before God? The Scriptures make it clear that in our flesh “nothing good dwells” (Rom. 7:18) and that “a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16). Our confidence must not rest in the works of our flesh, but in the finished work of Jesus Christ which He accomplished for us when He died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. When we truly trust Christ as Savior, we are then “found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).



ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE

March 14-16, 2008

Grace Bible Church will host its Annual Bible Conference March 14-16 this year. The theme is “Complete in Christ” (Studies in Colossians). There will be services Friday and Saturday nights at 7:00 and 8:30, regular Sunday morning services at 10:00 and 11:00, and a service Sunday night at 7:00.

FAMILY BIBLE CAMP

June 30 - July 4, 2008

Our Family Bible Camp will be held at Camp Arrowhead near Glenrose, Texas June 30 through July 4. Make your vacation plans now so you and your family can join us for this week of spiritual renewal. More details will be given later.

HOW TO BE SAVED

By John LaVier

That there is religious confusion among the “churches” no thinking person will deny. On every subject in the Bible there is a diversity of thought, and this applies even to the most fundamental doctrine of all, that of salvation. In answer to the age-old question, “What must I do to be saved?,” it is possible to get a score of different answers. Some would tell us to keep the Law of Moses. Others would refer us to the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount. Many would tell us to be good, or to do the best we can. Still others would insist that we must submit to some rite or ceremony, such as water baptism, and they might quote Acts 2:38, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

Do you ask why there is such confusion and division? It is because practically all, including the religious leaders, have completely overlooked the fact that God ushered in a new dispensation with the Apostle Paul. Because of failure to rec-

ognize this cardinal fact they are continually going to the wrong portion of the Word for their instructions.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth, He was here as a minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8). He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). After His death and resurrection the twelve apostles continued to deal with the Jewish nation, calling upon the nation to repent, and holding forth the promise that God would send Jesus Christ back again to establish the prophesied Kingdom (Acts 3:19-21). Israel was the God-favored nation, but when they refused the call to repentance they became the God-forsaken nation. It was then that God set aside the ministry of the twelve apostles and raised up another apostle, the Apostle Paul, and sent him forth with a proclamation of grace for all the world.

God’s message for this dispensation is not to be found in the words which Christ spoke while here upon earth, but in the

words spoken from the Father's right hand in the heavenlies. These words were spoken to and through the Apostle Paul, who said: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of **the dispensation of the grace of God** which is given me to you-ward" (Eph. 3:1-2). Through Paul, Christ revealed the unmixed message of grace for this dispensation.

For fifteen hundred years prior to the Cross, God had a religious people, and many things were required of them. Today, God does not want His people to be religious, but righteous, and this righteousness He provides as a free gift. The good news that He wants made known is that the guilty sinner may be declared righteous by faith alone in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not saved because of our morality or character, nor because of so-called good works or religious ceremonies. Salvation is on the basis of grace alone, through faith in the finished work and precious shed blood of God's Beloved Son.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of

God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8,9)

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24)

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1)

Christ is the sinner's only hope. Come as a sinner, trust Him as your Saviour and Lord, and know the joy of sins forgiven.

(Written in November 1952)

Only the Beginning

Your life is a book, and salvation is but the title page. The book itself remains to be written. It may be a volume of larger or smaller size, but it is written for eternity; see that it is written well. It is a book for the inspection of enemies as well as friends; be careful of every word. It is a book written under the eye of God; let it be done reverently, seriously, and fearlessly.

Changes in the *Timely Messenger*

As you can see from the different size of this publication, the *Timely Messenger* is going through some changes. This is one of the reasons why we have not published any issues since August 2007. I apologize for this break in publication and do appreciate those of you who have written or commented to me that you have missed receiving it.

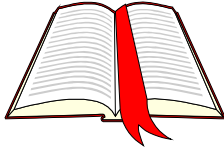
One of the reasons for the change has to do with the printing and preparation of this paper. From its beginning in 1940, one of the key individuals in the publication of the *Timely Messenger* has been Quenton Goynes who printed the paper on an in-house press and folded it for mailing. A few years ago, due to health reasons, Quenton was forced to stop doing the printing, though he continued doing the folding. This past year Quenton's health continued to fail, and he became unable to do the folding. This necessitated a change to a new physical format. We thank the Lord for the faithfulness and dedication Quenton has shown to the Lord and to the publication of this Bible study paper through these many years.

Besides the format, another change for the *Timely Messenger* will be the frequency of its publication. Instead of monthly, we are changing to a quarterly publication (4 times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall). Currently, I am the only person who is writing articles for this work. In the past, there have been numerous faithful men and women who wrote on a regular basis: our original pastor, Ike T. Sidebottom, our previous pastor, Charles Wages, and his wife, Beverly, and the pastor of Eleventh Avenue Church in Mineral Wells, R.B. Shiflet. Brother Ike has since gone home to be with the Lord. Pastor and Mrs. Wages and Pastor Shiflet are not currently writing. Again, we thank the Lord for their faithfulness in serving the Lord through the written page for these many, many years. I know their work has been a great help to many of you in understanding the Scriptures. While we will continue to publish some of their past works, I felt it best to reduce the number of times we publish each year.

Please pray for this ministry that God will continue to use this Bible study paper to proclaim the truth of God's Word, "rightly divided" and to bring glory and honor to His name.

—Gregg Bing, *Editor*

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS



The following Bible study materials are available free of charge for your personal use or for use in teaching a Bible class.

by Charles Wages

- Written for Our Learning
- Stepping Stones to Truth
- Past Pentecost to Paul
- Points to Ponder
- The Ages
- Saved by Grace
- Ministry of the Church
- The Perfect Will of God
- Once in a Lifetime
- Fellowship in Christ
- Hidden in God
- Thoughts on Vision
- Spiritual Fitness
- What Saith the Scripture
(Set of 6 Diff. Tracts)

by Mrs. Charles Wages

- Seasons
- Spiritual Thoughts for Young Minds
- A Man Named Paul
- Studies for Women

by R.B. Shiflet

- Informal Study: Philippians
- Informal Study: Ephesians
- Personal Meditations on Paul's Post-Acts Ministry
- Giving Under Grace
- Ultradispensationalism
- The Lord's Supper

by Ike T. Sidebottom

- The Book of Acts
- Through the Bible Dispensationally
- Prophetic Gleanings
- Saved, Settled and Sure
- Fellowship of the Mystery

by Gregg Bing

- Keys to the Word : Understanding the Bible
- That I May Know Him
- Making Good Choices
- For God So Loved the World
- It is Finished!
- Conformed to the Image of His Son
- The End of the World
- Assurance : Can We Know that We are Saved?

by John D. LaVier

- Yokefellows : Paul and His Companions
- Sure Words of Prophecy
- The Lord has Spoken
- Why is Heaven Silent?

Study to shew
thyself approved
unto God, a workman
that needed not to
be ashamed,
rightly dividing
the Word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15