



# THE BEACON BEAM

April 2015

## THE GRACE OF GOD

### Wisdom and Foolishness

By Harry Reeder

Seldom in an assigned writing project is the author given an opportunity to address a theme that permeates Scripture, that is pervasive in both the Old and New Testament. But in this instance, my assignment provides for that and more, since wisdom and the gospel life is a theme crucial to the gospel ministries of evangelism, discipleship, and Christian parenting. In addition, wisdom is a blessing of common grace granted by God to a world of impenitent sinners in His unfathomable kindness.

#### Gospel Wisdom

Through gospel evangelism, the grace of God grants sinners the wisdom to confess their sins and flee to the Son of God, who alone can and will save them from sin's guilt and power.

Furthermore, gospel-saturated discipleship allows saved sinners to employ the twofold, interdependent God-given means of acquiring wisdom—prayer in faith and “the hearing and doing” of God’s Word—as identified in James, which is often considered the New Testament book of wisdom. Additionally, wisdom is a desired objective in Christian parenting, as clearly extolled in Proverbs. Its value is illustrated in the repetitive summation of the effects of Mary and Joseph’s parenting in the life of Jesus. As Jesus embarks upon adolescence, the gospel of Luke sums up His childhood: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

Another summary statement of parental focus highlights the importance of developing wisdom as Christ enters manhood: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Admittedly, these verses beg for further treatment, but we can at least observe that in the limited amount of Scripture describing the parental activity of Joseph and Mary, we are repeatedly informed that He was “increasing in wisdom.”

*“...wisdom from above or wisdom from heaven is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere”  
(James 3:17-18).*

#### Types of Wisdom in Scripture

God’s Word reveals two types of wisdom. The first is *worldly wisdom*, which is “earthly, unspiritual, demonic” (James 3:15). This hell-derived wisdom leaves in its wake chaos, brokenness, factions, death, and destruction. The second is *wisdom from above*, granted by God to those who ask for it. It is found in His Word, and it is accessed by hearing that Word faithfully preached

and then by embedding it into our lives through obedience. Worldly wisdom is actually “the foolishness of man” masquerading as wisdom and propagated by man-made religions and a myriad of “isms”—humanism, progressivism, materialism, consumerism, secularism, etc. But in contrast, wisdom from above or wisdom from heaven is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (vv. 17-18).

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#### Schedule of Services:

##### Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM

Sunday School.....11:10 AM

Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

##### Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM

IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM

Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

# Beacon Highlights for April

## Special Events for April

01	Teen/Parent Focus	15	IMPACT Clubs
	IMPACT Clubs	16	Silver Saints
05	Easter	18	IMPACT Grand Prix
	ESL	19	Members Meeting
06	Tri-State Particular Baptist Fellowship	22	ESL
		22	IMPACT Clubs
08	IMPACT Clubs	23	Men Sharpening Men
11	Teen Homeplace Ministry	26-29	Spring Bible Conference
12	Lord's Table	26	ESL
	ESL		
	Senior High YAC		
14	Elders/Deacons Meeting		



*You are invited!*

## *Beacon Spring Bible Conference*

*Sunday, April 26 through Wednesday, April 29*

*With Pastor Mark Webb from Olive Branch, Mississippi*

## April Member Birthdays

01	Alice Marley
02	Kevin Isley
04	Bonnie Kooy
	Paul Nance
	Ann Rose
10	Les Bolton
	Daniel Freeman
11	Jamie Hinshaw
12	Linda Barker
	Don Boudreault
14	Pam Atkins
18	Dean Via
19	Jay Lowe
20	Brenda Yelverton
21	Gayle Davis
23	PJ Coble
24	Judy Caldwell
25	Angela Boyd
27	Ed Bradshaw
	Carl Hinshaw
	Rob McDorman
28	Greg Barkman
	Barbara Coble
	Joe Moody
30	Lori Craig

## April Missionary Birthdays

01	Cathy Payne
03	Joshua Jensen
10	David Racke
27	Trevor Johnson
28	Thomas Slawson
29	Steve Worth

*Happy Birthday!*

*Sympathy ~ We express our heartfelt sympathy to the family of:*

Wanda Gardner	Richard McDorman	Jim Sell
George Gilmour	Guy Noto	Georgia Wade
Mark Iseley	Patsy Partridge	
Magdalene E. Johnson	Louise Schlosser	

## The Beacon Broadcast

### Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.

### Sunday

WPCM 920 AM (Burlington, NC)	9:00 a.m.
WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WSML 1200 AM (Graham, NC)	8:30 p.m.
WLES 560 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
KUTR 820 AM (Salt Lake City, UT)	11:00 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards	9:30 p.m.
1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	

## Beacon Pastors

Gregory N. Barkman	<i>Senior Pastor</i>
Michael R. Karns	<i>Minister of Christian Education</i>
Robert F. La Tour	<i>Minister of Families</i>
Gerald J. Counts	<i>Minister of Visitation</i>
Gregory L. Phillips	<i>Minister of Music</i>

# Doctrinal History (Part Nine)

Greg Barkman

After tracing the influences that eventually led me to embrace the understanding of salvation historically called Calvinism, I began last month to record some of the steps utilized to bring our church to the same position. There is no question that the pulpit is the key to doctrinal reformation, but there were a number of other influences that contributed to a successful transformation. Although none of these was totally decisive in itself, the combination of factors were formative in the process.

I begin with the Bookroom. In the beginning it was a book table, but expanded into a Bookroom when we built our office and classroom addition in the 1990's. It became clear that we needed a good assortment of books written by authors who understood the doctrines of grace. Not that all the books were devoted to that subject. Far from it. The goal was not to bombard the church with books about Calvinistic soteriology, but to introduce our people to books on a wide variety of subjects written from the perspective of sound theology. Since theological understanding influences every topic we consider, we needed teaching that demonstrates how the doctrines of grace impact every area of life. When exposed to solid Christian literature, people learn that Calvinism is about more than the way God saves sinners. It also informs us concerning how to think Biblically about nearly every other subject we encounter. Of course, not everyone will read, but many will, especially if you provide them with quality material. Those who read good books will grow in understanding and will influence those around them, even those who themselves may not read. We sought to provide good literature, and eventually established a "Book of the Month" to encourage

profitable reading among our people. This paid rich dividends which continues to this day.

I pause to recall an anecdote from the early days when I was still a closet Calvinist. A new family began attending our church, and after a few months, the man said to me, "I recognize that you are a Calvinist. What can you suggest to help me understand the five points of Calvinism?" I was taken by surprise. In the first place, I was surprised that he recognized my Calvinism. At that point, I was not aware of saying anything explicit about my position. However, since Calvinism affects one's perspective on all of Scripture, this man recognized my underlying theology without hearing me spell it out. Good for him! I wish more listeners were similarly attentive. But this also presented a dilemma, as I really didn't have anything to offer him. As unbelievable as it may seem, I did not have a single book in my library that explained the doctrines of grace. I had avoided anything like that because I wanted to be certain that my understanding was shaped by Scripture, not by human authors. I now realize that my thinking at that time was a bit immature, but I'm simply telling you what happened. "I really can't think of anything I could loan you," I slowly replied. "O wait, I do have one book. It's written to disprove the doctrines of grace. It takes a contrary position, but it does go through the TULIP, and enumerates the key doctrines of Calvinism." I took the book off my shelf and handed it to him. I didn't know if I was making a mistake or not, but it really was the only thing I had at the time. I had penciled a few notations in the margins, perhaps fifteen or twenty in a book of 220 pages, strictly for my own benefit. Whenever I recognized a text of Scripture being misused, an argument that

was fallacious, or an historical assertion that I knew to be wrong, I simply made a short notation to correct the author. My friend took the book home, read it, and returned it two or three weeks later. "Thank you very much," he said. "I am now a Calvinist." Just like that. Amazing! I wonder how the author would feel if he knew that someone had become a Calvinist through reading his book denouncing Calvinism! But it showed me two things: First, the power of truth, even when meted out in small doses. And second, the potential of books. If a book like this, read and thoughtfully considered, produced such a profound change in theology, imagine what the right kind of books could do? It was not long after that that we began our first book table.

A second important influence has been our procedure for receiving new members. After we eliminated the altar call, we designed a short application for people to fill out and return to indicate their interest in membership. We inaugurated a system of interviews, first by a pastor and then by a membership committee to hear testimonies of salvation and to answer questions. But something was missing. Two or three times, people joined the church who said they understood our position and agreed with it, only to depart later expressing dissatisfaction with Calvinism. At first I was perplexed. I thought we had covered that issue up front. They agreed with what we said, but apparently didn't really understand what we meant. Later, when they heard Calvinistic teaching, such as the doctrine of election, they backed away. Evidently we needed a better way to communicate doctrinal clarity. Thus it was that we began, about twenty years ago, requesting new members to complete a workbook on the doc-

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# Amazing Grace from Start to Finish

Bob La Tour

**E**phesians 2:4-10 “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The backdrop of God’s righteous wrath against sin magnifies His grace towards sinners that is truly amazing! Grace is God’s goodness “directed towards human debt and demerit.”<sup>1</sup> “Grace is His voluntary, unrestrained, unmerited, favor toward guilty sinners, granting them justification and life instead of the penalty of death, which they deserved.” “To bestow gifts upon the miserable is bounty; but to bestow them upon rebels is grace. The greatness of the gifts contrasted with the characters of those who receive them, displays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer’s grace. He came to save not the unhappy only, but the ungodly. He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life to His enemies; whose minds are so entirely alienated from him that, until He makes them willing, in the day of His power, their minds are determined against accepting favor from Him.” So said John Newton, who referred to himself as a wretch, and who authored “Faith’s Review and Expectation,” better known as “Amazing Grace!” “Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch; like me! I once

was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see. ’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed! The Lord hath promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures. When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we first begun.”

*“At 82, John Newton said, ‘My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior.’”*

When the New Testament was written, secular Greek defined grace as “a favor done without claim or expectation of return, and finding its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver.”<sup>3</sup> In Greek society, it was always limited to friends and never bestowed upon enemies. Christ changed all of that! “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard....”<sup>4</sup>

God determines grace for His glory: Ephesians 1:2 “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 5-6 ... Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, ac-

ording to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

God dispenses grace to us as His gift: Ephesians 2:8-10 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

God develops grace in us for our good: Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly (self-controlled), righteously (uprightly), and godly (devoutly) in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

God determined grace past, present and promised. May we never lose sight of the fact that we are debtors to God’s grace for our salvation (God’s Righteousness At Christ’s Expense). We are debtors to God’s grace for our sanctification (God’s Resources And Christ’s Enabling). We are debtors to God’s grace for our glorification when Christ returns for His own (God’s Riches At Christ’s Exaltation).<sup>5</sup>



Dread thought is this that escapes words—I had no hope, no help, no plea. Enslaved, ‘entombed,’ estranged and doomed, God’s righteous wrath awaited me. *Blind to that realm beyond*

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## The Biblical Map to Wisdom

The biblical map to wisdom from above is initiated in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature and further defined in James. This map for receiving grace-enabled wisdom from above is accurate *knowledge* employed with pervasive *understanding*, ultimately expressed in lifestyle *wisdom*. In other words, as Proverbs puts it, the map is “to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight” (Prov. 1:2). In other words, the God-designed three-step journey to wisdom from above for those we are discipling or the children we are parenting is definitively delineated in God’s Word.

### Step One: Knowledge

For the Christian, knowledge begins with divine revelation, not human imagination or intuition. The inerrant Word of God is not only reliable but sufficient to give us all we need to frame a consistent Christian world-and-lifeview. Everything in God’s Word is truth. Yet, not all truth is in the Bible—God’s creation tells us much. So while everything in the Bible is true, not all truth is in the Bible; but all the truth we need to know for a life saturated with godly wisdom is found in the Bible. As Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In the journey to wisdom, we must personally pursue knowledge from God’s Word and persuasively guide those we are discipling and parenting to hear God’s Word faithfully preached while leading them to intentional obedience with humble reliance upon God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, pas-

sors must preach the Word no matter how intense the opposition may be, explicitly or implicitly. In so doing, we create an environment for the development of Holy Spirit-given wisdom from above in the lives of our people.

### Step Two: Understanding

A Bible-derived, accurate knowledge is foundational for step one in the pursuit of wisdom from above to develop a Christian world-and-life-view. But, it is equally crucial to take step two by seeking the Holy Spirit’s blessing of *understanding*. This is the experience of maturation as we learn how to use our *knowledge* to interpret the trials of life and learn from them. A trial of life, like any other test, reveals what we actually know and what we yet need to know. This results in a lifestyle that is capable of applying what we *know* and *understand* in order to interpret the trials of life with a God-glorifying and joy-revealing response.

There are two avenues to gain this God-delivered and grace-empowered understanding. The first is a focused petition for understanding through believing prayer. The second is to recruit and employ godly and mature counselors. (There is wisdom in many counselors, but make sure they are *wisecounselors*, not just any counselors.) This cadre of mentors should be enhanced by a prayerful selection of spiritually mature peers who will pray for you, challenge you, encourage you, and finish the race with you.

### Step Three: Wisdom

Wisdom is the goal and destination. Wisdom made real in our lives is a God-glorifying, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-empowered, and Bible-shaped lifestyle. Our Lord affirms this by informing us, “Wisdom is justified by her deeds” (Matt. 11: 19). In other words, the wise man or woman leaves

a trail that glorifies God and displays the joy of the Lord even in a broken world. The entire life of a believer—mentally, socially, emotionally, and volitionally—is to be formed with a Christ-centered life-view, propelled by a Christ-passionate life-love, displayed in a Christ-shaped life-style.

*Wisdom from above* will never be sought until it is prized. It will not be prized until the preeminence of Christ is treasured above all. This leads us to our confessed need of God’s grace. Without it, we will not prize Christ or His preeminence, for we will remain susceptible to all of the idols that this world offers and that our hearts can manufacture. The heart of the problem is always the problem of the heart.

But, we have good news. The gospel, which is the wisdom of God, though despised by the world and called foolish, saves sinners like you and me. This gospel wisdom proclaimed to the world is summed up in the cross of Christ. There, the love of God met the holiness of God to save sinners for the glory of God. It delivers us from the sophisticated pursuit of the imbecility of worldly wisdom—true foolishness—while calling us to give our new hearts to Him who designed it to be His throne over all of our life. Christ, who is our Wisdom, will then be preeminent in all things (1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 1:18).

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From Ligonier Ministries and R. C. Sproul.  
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**W**e have a little cat who came to live with us more than 13 years ago, a give-away at a yard sale in Mebane. It was one of a litter of kittens and still so small that its gender was only a guess. The owner, knowing what we wanted and eager to find homes for the lot of them, pronounced this kitten a male.

Since the girls and I had watched the movie 'Emma' often enough to have memorized all the best lines, it was reasonable that we would name our little boy cat after the main male character in the movie, and so he was christened 'Mr. Knightley'. As kittens do, Mr. Knightley grew quickly and in fine form. He showed himself early on to be a dedicated mouser and that sealed his position in the family. It wasn't long until he not only looked full grown, but became quite a chubby little guy, especially around the middle. This particular change in figure developed at an alarming rate, so much so that we became concerned for his health. We were by this time, enjoying regular visits with Gabe Duncan and since he had, for a time, been responsible for the well-being of the mice used for research at Duke, (I'm still not sure why we thought there was a connection there) we had our future son-in-law take a look at Mr. Knightley and give his medical opinion. "A tumor...or pregnant" was his pronouncement, as I remember it. Oh my! We hoped it was not a tumor, but my goodness...a litter for our Mr. Knightley???

Mr. Knightley ended up having two litters and made the move to title character...we now call her Emma. Emma has been a good cat. She lives in the shop with the yard equipment, hunts out in the woods every day, and does her main job of keeping mice away from the house. She is a typical cat in attitude, that being one of supe-

riority, in spite of the fact that we humans are supposed to be in charge around here. We think we know this little cat quite well, but in fact, it is she who knows us!

Our eating habits, for instance. As soon as my van door is opened she is inside. Why? Because she knows I eat in my van during long days on the road, and since eating and driving are a messy mix there will be crumbs on the floor. She also knows that my husband never eats in his car. How do we know she knows? Because she NEVER jumps into his car. There are no crumbs there for which to forage.

*"A vitally important part of knowing someone is to know their ways...observe their character, see what they do, put the two things together."*

She also knows about our individual hearing issues, such as the fact that Greg has hearing loss and that I am at the opposite end of the spectrum, with such sensitive hearing that *everything* is too loud for me. When she realizes he's seen her on the hood of his car she runs from her warm perch. She knows his ears are not bothered by the sound of the car horn activated inside the garage. The possibility of his hitting the panic but-

ton on the remote will send her scurrying when she hears no more than the dangling of his car keys. I can dangle MY car keys and she glances my direction and goes back to sleep. She knows I will not activate the horn because I cannot bear the sound.

Even though he doesn't welcome her on his car, Greg is her favorite and though I can't say exactly *how* she conveys this, (there is just something in her demeanor), I know *why*. It is he who feeds her twice a day and brings that cup of warm cream to her every morning. She has come to expect this, knowing him to be a man of routine, and she accepts his gift of cream, not with gratitude, but a hint of impatience tinged with just a bit of 'about time'.

Emma knows me well enough to sense when I'm on my guard against her unlawful entry into the house, and when I'm not. She sits quietly on the back porch while I unload groceries. As I open the back door, I gently touch my toe to her nose to remind her she is not to come in. Trip after trip she sits, but when I trudge the steps with the last load, she is no longer on the porch. Ahhh, I think, no cat to deal with. But Emma knows...the sound of the car door closing means this is the last load and if she is not on the porch, my guard is down. I open the back door and she leaps from behind me from the floor below and into the house in one movement! I don't even see her do this, but suddenly realize she is ambling down the den passageway toward the hallway where she will slowly meander through the foyer and dining room 'til she reaches the kitchen. She knows as she enters the kitchen that I will be behind the door waiting to catch her as she passes by. But she's now ready to go back outside, so allows 'our' game to end.

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Amazing Grace from Start to Finish

Bob La Tour

*(Continued from page 4)*

the grave, I did not know my lost estate,  
Nor did I crave the things of God, Nor  
could I understand my fate.<sup>6</sup>

But grace abounded more than sin, And  
love applied the Master's plan. His  
Spirit brought to me new life Predes-  
tined e'er the world began. Christ's  
finished work, naught left undone,  
Secured God's pardon for His own.  
No more a debtor to the Law, God  
has declared my sin atoned!<sup>7</sup>

Though spared from wrath, with soul  
set free, Corrupt desires still war within.

The new man must e'er fight his  
flesh—That humanness so drawn to  
sin. Renew my mind, transform my  
heart, And make me pleasing in Thy  
sight. Ne'er let the flame of gratitude  
Forget the wrath that was my plight.<sup>8</sup>

Glad slave of Sov'reign love, I give  
Myself a living sacrifice—Not for my  
pardon, but His praise Who pur-  
chased me at awful price. I can but  
lift both heart and voice In praise to  
God Who doth sustain. Though foes  
assail and pain prevail, Secure in  
Christ I will remain.

1. A.W. Tozer
2. H. Bavnick
3. K. Wuest
4. Colossians 1:21-23a
5. II Corinthians 5:20-21;  
II Corinthians 12:9; I Peter 1:13
6. Psalm 14:1-3
7. Ephesians 1 & 2
8. Romans 6,7,8; 12; John 10 & 17

O LORD GOD, teach me to know that grace precedes, accompanies, and follows my salvation, that it sustains the redeemed soul, that not one link of its chain can ever break. From Calvary's cross wave upon wave of grace reaches me, deals with my sin, washes me clean, renews my heart, strengthens my will, draws out my affection, kindles a flame in my soul, rules throughout my inner man, consecrates my every thought, word, work, teaches me thy immeasurable love.

—The Valley of Vision, A collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions

Marti Barkman

## On the Feminine Side

*(Continued from page 6)*

And don't think YOU are unknown to her. She knows a bit about our guests, how they never seem to pay attention to little things. Like the fact that the front storm door doesn't close properly. Even if you pull it tight, it tends to pop open and she is in and halfway to the basement before someone is heard to say, "I hope it's ok for your cat to come in". Of course it's not ok, but Emma knows a strange car parked in the driveway is the sign for a quick once-through, or better yet, a shooing down to the basement where a nap on the love seat awaits her. She knows all of us too well!

I thought of Emma when I read this in Isaiah: "The ox knows its

owner and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel doesn't know me" (1:2-3). The Lord is saying that his people don't even know him well enough to know why their lives are unacceptable to him. What does it mean to know someone? How do we know if we really know God? Emma, because of what she has observed hundreds of times over the 13+ years of her life, is wise to our ways and she places herself in the path of the opportunities our ways create. A vitally important part of knowing someone is to know their ways...observe their character, see what they do, put the two things together. When I see what God does, in the light of correct knowledge of him, it helps me correctly interpret what is going on in my life. When I know his

attributes his actions will amaze me. When I consider God with only my finite knowledge, I will misunderstand, resent, and complain about what he does. But his actions become paths of opportunity when I understand his ways. I will see grace and kindness instead of harshness. I will accept what he does instead of demanding my own way. I will understand just how amazing his love really is when I am aware of the magnitude of his holiness! Let's observe and learn! And when we do, we'll come to a very important question: Is my life acceptable to God?

# Doctrinal History (Part Nine)

Greg Barkman

*(Continued from page 3)*

trines of grace as a component of the membership process. At first we used material produced by another church, but soon discovered the book published by Banner of Truth entitled, *God's Riches, A Work-Book on the Doctrines of Grace*, by John Benton and John Peet. It contains eleven chapters, each five or six pages of large print and lots of "fill in the blanks." We considered it perfect for our situation. We pair each applicant with a member of the church to disciple him through the book, covering one or two chapters per session until complete. We tried a New Members Class, but decided the one-on-one approach works better for us. It allows people to start at any time, to proceed at their own pace, and to form close ties with a member of the church. Now, everyone who comes into membership knows exactly what we believe, and since we inaugurated this procedure, nobody has "bailed out" over

doctrine. They not only understand what we believe, but if they were previously uncertain, they now embrace it for themselves. Furthermore, by utilizing church members, many of our older members also worked through this book in the process of discipling others. Slowly over the years, our membership became knowledgeable and solid in the doctrines of grace. Today, we enjoy remarkable doctrinal unity.

Another helpful influence was organizing groups to attend Bible Conferences where the speakers embraced the doctrines of grace. It was not necessary, nor even especially desirable that the sermons teach Calvinism as such. But it was immeasurably helpful for our people to hear excellent Bible expositors who are sound in theology, and perhaps equally important, to meet Christians from other churches who share their commitment to the doctrines of grace. Even if only a small number of church

members attend such conferences every year, the cumulative effect over several years is significant. Our people came home with a new enthusiasm for the Biblical gospel, and became increasingly comfortable with who we are as a church.

What I have described takes time, lots of time. Impatience spoils the process, but perseverance will win the day. As more members become knowledgeable and committed, they are able to influence and teach others. It's encouraging to see our members offering books, tapes, and CD's to people visiting our church to help them gain an understanding of these precious truths. God has been so good to us at Beacon. I cannot praise Him enough for bringing us to a solidly Biblical understanding. "Praise the Savior, ye who know Him, who can tell how much we owe Him. Gladly let us render to Him all we are and have."



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