

July 2016 UK, Russia, Italy, Azerbaijan, America, Latvia

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Matthew 18 there is an MP3 file about this at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/mt18b.mp3>

You can see the archives of our MP3 files at <http://aletheiacollege.net/archives.html> and on iTunes at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/christadelphian-bible-talks/id987163468>

Download the *NEV Bible* with commentary and Bible Companion bookmarks at <http://n-e-v.info/NEVBIBLE.pdf>

UK

We continue enjoying great response to various outreach efforts. We are planning this week and next Saturday 23rd July God willing to distribute leaflets on the Phipps Bridge Estate in Mitcham, one of South London's roughest housing estates, full of high density blocks of flats. We have the leaflets printed and have started distributing them. They offer free *NEV Bibles* and *Bible Basics*, and invite folks to come to a seminar on the 26th July God willing, in the community centre at the heart of the estate. The leaflets so far delivered have had 1 reply every 50 distributed! That is amazing. Please, do come along and share fellowship with us in this campaign. We can put you up overnight if needed. Do give us a call on 07481122558 if you are in the UK and can help. Four year old Daniel has been a star at distributing leaflets. Duncan asked him what he would like as a small present seeing he had worked so hard and bravely [the estate and local residents are all rather daunting for a 4 year old]... he described something unusual which couldn't easily or at least immediately be bought. On returning home, we found that very thing had been given to him through the kindness of a sister we had baptized in Woking, and was waiting there for him having come through the post. It was one of those coincidences which shows there is a God above who is so keenly watching and listening to our lives, our service, and our thoughts and words.

RUSSIA

As reported last week, the new legislation signed in to power in Russia is very serious. No religious literature may be produced without prior registration [which the Government is only granting to the Orthodox churches]; and an American who entered Russia on a tourist visa to visit Christians has been arrested, imprisoned and now being deported. There is some more information at http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2197

This means that Russia has returned to a more aggressive stance against Protestant Christians than even in the 1980s. All meetings however small and attempts to evangelize by Russian citizens, even via email or the internet, are now forbidden.

ITALY

As mentioned in a previous Carelink, there are a group of people near Bologna studying *Bible Basics* every week, one has been baptized by us a few weeks ago, and now others are coming up to baptism. Let us know if you'd like to join in further teaching and presence at the baptisms, which we plan over the next few weeks God willing. Brother Joseph writes: "We are having a house fellowship in my house every saturday evening using the *Bible Basics* as a study book and reading individually at home, then having a preview or sharing opinions on the book. Your support and enthusiasm with the Bibles and the books to encourage us is overwhelming, to say thank you is an understatement but i know the good Lord knows it all and will surely bless you more for all the good and gracious things you have done. We have 3 new brothers waiting to be baptised this summer".

LATVIA

Meetings continue at the *Riga Bible Centre*, and we continue feeding both our brethren and sisters and visitors to the Bible talks. We're also pleased to say that the heating system at the housing project we run in northern Latvia has been installed. There are now radiators rather than the forced air system in place, ready for the long Winter:



Brother Maxim continues working hard all round and is just invaluable and a true blessing to the Lord's work there. This week, SLAVIK was baptized at the Riga ecclesia, you can see him here with brother Maxim:



The work in Riga is wonderful and really does need your continued financial support. We plan the usual Winter feeding program from October to March God willing; do please consider coming over and helping with the cooking. In connection with this, all kitchen workers there need a certificate issued by a Latvian trained medical doctor who updates their hygiene certifications every two years. Cindy has been able to issue these certificates as she has both those qualifications. It saves a lot of time and expense in getting them issued otherwise. But she does need to take a refresher course in her hygiene certification as her two years is up. This costs around 200 pounds and we are open to donations towards that.

AZERBAIJAN

After a couple of years waiting in suspense and very difficult circumstances in Azerbaijan, our refugee sister R has been granted acceptance by the UNHCR. Thanks so much for your prayers and continued support for her.

NORTH AMERICA

We're pleased to report the baptism of IMDAD who came to us from the internet, but being in a difficult domestic situation as the family are strongly Moslem, chose to baptize herself. Please pray for her.

Also, here is the personal witness to God's grace of brother Miles:

My name is Miles and this is not a testimonial, it's just my story. The only reason it is special is because it happened to me. Your special story is different, will be different, or won't be at all. Everyone has their own special story and you decide to either tell it or not. A friend asked me to tell my tale so I have decided to share a bit of it because I respect my friend's wishes a good deal and being a "Southern Boy" from The Southern USA, I have a heritage of talking too much about fishing or about God.

I am a seventy year old retired art teacher, living with my wife of near forty years, on the coast of California. I have two advanced university degrees, a milieu of bohemian and social activist friends who think Christianity is at best an interesting myth, and on July 5 of 2016 I walked into

the local high school public pool and baptized myself , by immersion, in the name of The Lord Jesus Christ and for the forgiveness of my sins. My friends say I'm nuts behind my back, my wife isn't sure but seems to love me anyway, and my cat doesn't care as long as I feed her.

But I feel so wonderful I don't care. There is a very new sense of Grace and possibility in my life. I accepted Christ's gift of eternal life and I've been rebooted, if not reborn. I am in a new covenant and it is personal.

Now this is where I have to be honest and tell you I don't like testimonials. I don't mean that in a nasty or spiteful way but I have never understood how all the incredible things that lead you to Christ and God could help me in my own journey. That probably sounds worse than I mean it. But how Grace made you move, swim, or crawl to God is such a specific and personal story they are hard for me to relate too. The problem is I don't want to talk about all the possible dots that God connected leading me to that high school pool on a cold a foggy morning in July.

I can tell you now I don't understand anything about all the moments that somehow seamlessly made it possible for me to accept Christ's gift of Grace. My wife has always said I didn't receive gifts well. And here I am trembling like a newly wed and running to accept a vow from God's Son to love and save me and give me an eternal life on a "heaven on earth" after the Last Judgement. That's too much to believe in for any of my friends and family. I can't explain to anyone how I know this. I can tell you what is in the Bible (which many have read in their lives), but I cannot tell you how to come to that realization. I think that that belief is actually the real gift- that is how Grace shines in a heart, like a storm or wind rushing in. And that is how a life begins to change.

Redemption is not a moment, it's a process. I will be repenting and being redeemed until I go to sleep in the Lord and am called to the Judgement however far away that is. But I have accepted God's Son's promise to me and I have asked him to come into my life and guide me forever. Forever is a long time and knowing me I could screw up. That is why I now ask Jesus often for guidance and some bit of wisdom to keep me going on His path. And since The Bible is what we have of God's word I have begun reading it often.

I was raised a Christian and had years within both the Presbyterian Church (of my youth) and The Eastern Orthodox Church. I was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church for taking Communion at a non-Orthodox church. To tell the truth I knew it would be frowned upon but I didn't know I would get iced. I had been told my first week in Orthodoxy that "It was easier to ask forgiveness than permission." At any rate I lost my friends and was supposedly cut off from the saints, etc. I have taken classes in both Old and New Testament at a small Presbyterian college in North Carolina, and studied scriptures informally under my Orthodox priest.

All that being said, I have a brain like a sieve. I can't remember verse and scripture but I get the Big Picture. I learn in sweeps of understanding. I've never been able to memorize baseball cards and averages, but I do recognize the beauty of a home run. I can't quote chapter and verse but I can tell you in my own words the wonder and awe that each verse unveils. I can tell you Grace shimmers in time and space. I can tell you that Grace shimmers through history.

After leaving "The Church", I still prayed but it was usually asking either for something to happen or not to happen. It was like putting letters in bottles and throwing them out to sea. I basically became resolved to God's indifference or maybe my own. I was in the end responsible for giving up on God. It's a hard thing to say but I think it is true, I gave up on God.

It's a frightening thing to realize but I never really trusted God to answer my prayers. I always wanted to, even in Orthodoxy but I never felt a sense of trusting God. Jesus and God to me were always a kind of "good cop"/"bad cop" routine. God scared me- always did. Wrathful, Jealous,

Vengeful sounded like a God you shouldn't mess with. Jesus was different . He was loving and kind and you went to him. That's the way I felt for years. In the Trinitarian tradition the persons really meant a separate "person."- so you could deal with Jesus and avoid God.

That's pretty much what I did. Jesus and The Holy Spirit were approachable, and cool, and trust worthy but God was like an abusive father who ruled by whim for a vast array of unknowable reasons. I asked my priest several times how come we were always begging for mercy. It seems in a loving home that kids don't fall to their knees and ask for mercy every time their daddy comes in the door. It wasn't until my Baptism on July 5th that I made a little head way in loving and trusting God. It was through saying "yes" to Jesus that a new possibility of love and trust began. I have no idea why- it just made sense now.

For years I have read religious theologies and philosophy. A month or so back I started reading about the Adventist Movements at the mid 19th century (I have absolutely no idea why- curiosity I guess) . I had covered the Millerites and Second Adventists when the word Christadelphians was mentioned. I had never heard the word before nor of the movement so i began my research. I wasn't interested in finding anything to believe in. I just love history and the social history of the mid 19th century in the U.S was a time ripe with new ideas, prophecies, and Biblical interpretations. New religions and sects were springing up across America and The Christadelphians was one I had never heard of before. The more I read the more intrigued I became. The Non-Trinitarianism, the idea of a finite soul, the concept of Jesus as the human Son of God, all were ideas I had pondered in my both my Presbyterian and Orthodox studies.

I can tell you exactly when everything begin to change. On June 18th I found a You Tube video by Duncan Heaster on The Christadelphian movement and its history. It was really interesting and I continued watching other videos. I wrote and asked for a *New European Version Bible* (with commentary by Mr. Heaster) and a copy of *Bible Basics*. I had watched several videos by Duncan and decided to watch a movie or read a novel. My wife was away for a few days so I had no commitments and plenty of time. I just couldn't get interested in anything else. I wanted to know more. So I started watching *Bible Basics*. It took three days but watched all of them. I was so excited by seeing Christ thorough different eyes, newly, freshly and with a more open heart I didn't know what to do. I couldn't find my Bible so I just prayed.

As my heart began to open God seemed to slip in with His Son. I had felt Christ's calling before but this time it wasn't filtered through a Church or a whole body of expectations from priests, bishops or parishioners. This time Christ and I decided no one else needed to be involved. It was a very private and personal matter (One of the reasons a testimonial is difficult for me). I feel like I don't want to say too much about the secret love that exists between Christ and I. In fact I can't tell you what happened, but I will say that the lectures and way Duncan Heaster presented the Bible made something in me reawaken to Christ's promise in a new and personal way. I knew that I wanted to be Baptized in Christ not into "the Church body" but into the Body of Christ.

I had never thought much about The End Times and Last Judgement but began to consider them seriously. I felt an urgency about the Baptism and shocked my wife when I told her I was going to Baptize myself on my 70th birthday not many days away. Duncan and I corresponded and arranged for a phone on July 5th. And through the Grace of God, talked both before and after my Baptism.

What happened in the swimming pool is just between me and God. I couldn't really express the terrible wonder of death and resurrection anyway. How still the heart becomes, the beating stopped in a moment of love. The gasp for life when emerging into Christ- the subtle knowing

"it's going to be ok from here on. Christ has your back."

So here I am shimmering in Grace waiting for The Last Days , praying I don't screw up, and so happy my toes are curling."

Sister Candice from Texas, USA gives us another example of how we can reach out to our neighbours. She sent a photo with the following explanation: "This is Conner age 11 our neighbor 2 houses down hanging out with my son Samuel age 8. Today he received his copy of the *NEV Bible* & also taking 2 home to his parents . They are going to start the *Bible Basics*".



PRAYER POINTS

- For the brotherhood in Russia
- For those baptized this week
- For the campaign work in South London UK
- For the group in Bologna, Italy
- Thanksgiving for the acceptance of sister R as a genuinely persecuted asylum seeker

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks