

Sunday, January 12, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 122 The Life and Ministry of C. Richard Jordan: The Formative Years, 1962 to 1980

Introduction

- While Stam and GBC were having their controversy in the late 60s and early 70s, the beginnings of what would later prove to be a new movement within Grace Circles was taking shape in the farm country of Alabama. In the early 1960s C. Richard Jordan was saved and began to learn the Grace message both from his Pastor Roy Lange and from his own study. In the course of time, Jordan would eventually move to Chicago to work for Pastor Stam at the Berean Bible Society before he began the pastoral training classes which later became Grace School of the Bible. It is to this story that we now turn our attention.
- Please note that the contents of this lesson are taken from a recorded personal interview I conducted with Pastor Jordan in my home on Friday, June 21, 2013.

Salvation and Early Grace Education

- Jordan was saved December 31, 1962 at the age of fifteen. Raised in a Methodist home, Jordan went to church with his parents throughout his childhood and learned to play the organ. It was at youth camp during the summer of 1962 that Richard came to the realization the he was lost—a realization that he struggled with for six months. Not knowing what to do, Jordan did everything the Methodist church told him to do but had no peace. It was while practicing the organ for the watch night service on New Year’s Eve at the Methodist Church that the lyrics to the song “Just As I Am, Without One Plea” struck a chord within Jordan’s heart and he trusted the shed blood of Christ as the only payment for his sins right there on the organ bench.
- Richard described his conversion as a “road to Damascus experience” that immediately changed his life. After Christmas break was over, Jordan went back to school and told his 9th grade history teacher Roy Lange, pastor of Forest Park Bible Church that he had trusted Christ over Christmas break. Jordan noted that Brother Lange was the first person to understand him when he told him he got saved. From the first day back at school and for the rest of the school year, Jordan ate lunch every day with Brother Lange and discussed the Bible.
- Pastor Jordan described Brother Lange as his first instructor in the Grace message. Lange immediately instructed Jordan to begin reading Paul’s epistles. In January of 1963 Jordan began attending Brother Lange’s church. He would go with his parents to the early service at the Methodist Church and then get a ride to the 11:00 a.m. meeting at Brother Lange’s. Forest Park Bible Church had a bookstore where Jordan obtained and read everything he could get his hands on by Stam, Baker, Root, and other Grace authors. Borrowing from Pastor Lange’s personal library, Jordan read all the back volumes of the *Berean Searchlight* and *Truth Magazine*. Richard described Stam’s *Things That Differ* as having had the greatest impact on his early thinking. In addition, between January and August, 1963 Richard reported that he read through Paul’s epistles three dozen times.

- Jordan said that within a few months he “got it” in terms of grasping the Grace message. Jordan cited the fact that coming into right division as a “blank slate” was an advantage in terms of him grasping the Grace message because he did not have many things that he needed to “unlearn.”
 - The first class Jordan ever taught was to his peers at the Methodist Church in September, 1963. It was in this context that he first learned that you could “get in trouble” for teaching right division.
- After a Modernist was sent to pastor the Methodist Church, the Jordan family left and started attending a Baptist Church that was led by Jordan’s uncle. It was at the Baptist Church that Jordan met his future wife Cynthia and the administrators of the local rescue mission. It was through his work and preaching at the rescue mission that Jordan avoided having to attend the Baptist Church with any regularity.
- After attempting to preach on a street corner in downtown Mobile, Jordan encountered some people from the city mission who allowed him to preach using their PA system. It was through these men that Richard met the folks who ran the Mobile rescue mission. Brother and Sister Reynolds from the mission were dispensationalists out of Dr. Henry Grube’s ministry as well as early participants in the Exchanged Life Movement. It was through the Reynolds family that Jordan was also exposed to the basics of identity based living very early in his Christian life.

The King James Bible

- It was at the rescue mission that Jordan first encountered a problem with the Bible issue. Jordan’s uncle had told him that the American Standard Version was the most accurate but everyone still used the KJV. Thinking that the ASV was the best, Jordan began to use it exclusively for both study and preaching. While the Reynolds were King James people, they allowed Richard to preach in the mission using his ASV for a long time. Mrs. Reynolds, however, never stopped speaking to Jordan about her concern over the Bible he was using. Richard described her as even being brought to tears over it on more than one occasion.
- Finally, while in college, Richard told Mrs. Reynolds that he was going to prove her wrong with respect to the translation issue. According to Jordan, it was not the manuscript arguments that initially convinced him but the differences in the various English translations. After being shown scores of differences, it was Mark 1:2 that struck a chord with Jordan that the Reynolds might be correct. With Mark 1:2 in mind, Jordan then studied the differences between the various manuscript traditions and realized that their underlying textual issues accounted for the differences between the KJV and the ASV.
- The first book Jordan read on the subject was the J.J. Ray book *God Only Wrote One Book*. It was given to him by Mrs. Reynolds. At some point in the mid-60s Jordan read Peter Ruckman’s book *Bible Babel* for the first time an experience that he characterized as “reading scalding acid.” Ruckman’s book provided the textual arguments and Ray’s book the verses for Jordan’s

consideration. What stuck with Jordan was Ruckman's statement that people will believe their doctrinal statement on the matter of inerrancy and then turn around and promote a translation that contained clear errors (Mark 1:2). Richard went to Ruckman's school for one year before he was kicked out because of his dispensational beliefs. His goal in attending was to learn as much from Ruckman as he could about manuscript evidence and church history. It was also during his time at Ruckman's school that Jordan met E.C. Moore who was teaching with Ruckman at the time.

- Dr. Dobbs—supported the ASV
 - Dr. Ruckman—supported the KJV
- Through reading Louis Gaussen's book *La Théopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, 1840, Jordan was exposed to the term "mechanical dictation." Given the verses about God putting his words into the mouth of human authors (Jer. 1:9) this concept resonated with Jordan even though it had fallen out of favor in Fundamentalist circles during the 20th century. While attending Ruckman's school, Jordan sat for a time under the teaching of Dr. Edward F. Hills. However, it was from Peter Ruckman that he was first exposed to the doctrine of Preservation. It was his desire to know more about how the Bible was preserved that led Jordan to study the material that he would later teach in the Manuscript Evidence class of Grace School of the Bible. According to Jordan, it was the doctrine of Preservation that allowed him to anchor his belief in an inerrant Bible, not upon a whim and a prayer but a clearly demonstrable Bible doctrine.
 - Jordan reached clarity on the Bible issue in the early 1970s after he moved his family to central Alabama to pastor a Grace church in Selma. The first four years they were in Selma, Jordan and his family lived in the country seventeen miles from town and could only afford to go to town three times a week. According to Jordan, it was during these four years he probably studied his Bible sixty hours a week and read through the Bible four to six times a year.
 - Jordan described his confidants at this time as being primarily Brother Roy Lange, Brother E.C. Moore, and Dr. Henry Grube. It was through E.C. Moore that Richard ended up leading the group in Selma. Moore had led that group for a while before he left to teach at Ruckman's school. Brother Moore did not begin teaching the Acts 28 view until 1973 or 1974. When Moore began teaching the Acts 28 position, Richard recognized it immediately because he had read many of Charles Welch's books by borrowing them from Dr. Grube.

The Pauline Design for the Edification of the Believer

- It was during these years in Selma that Richard studied and taught himself the Pauline Design for the Edification of the Believer. After studying all the Grace literature, the next book Jordan studied was Clarence Larkin's *Dispensational Truth*. It was from reading Larkin's book three times that Jordan gained an understanding of the prophetic program (and also learned to draw charts).

- J. Sidlow Baxter's *Explore the Book* was the first book Jordan read as a guide to studying the entire Bible. From Baxter, whom Jordan believes was influenced by E.W. Bullinger, he learned how to study books and outline them. Richard did not read E.W. Bullinger's *The Church Epistles* until the early 1970s (probably about 1973). It was then that he realized that Baxter had read Bullinger. The main thing Jordan learned from Baxter was how to follow the thought flow of passages and books. It was from reading Baxter's treatment of Paul's epistles that Jordan first noted the pattern of Doctrine, Reproof, and Correction in Paul's epistles. It was not from Bullinger that Jordan first noted this pattern but from Baxter. Later, after reading Bullinger, he realized that Baxter had been influenced by Bullinger.
- Prior to reading either Baxter or Bullinger, Jordan noted the structure of Romans 16:25-26 in terms of the how believers are established during the dispensation of grace. He then observed that same structure or progression (form of sound words) in the rest of Paul's epistles:
 - Romans through Galatians—Cross
 - Ephesians through Colossians—Church
 - I & II Thessalonians—Coming
 - I Timothy through Philemon—Congregation
- Jordan's teaching regarding Romans 16:25-26 came from the realization that perfected saints do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). Jordan found in these verses Paul's method for producing perfected saints. Jordan taught these doctrines to himself during his years in Selma in the early 1970s before later teaching them publicly.