

Sunday, February 2, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 125  
The Life and Ministry of C. Richard Jordan: The Grace Alternatives

### **Introduction/Review**

- Since last Sunday, when we taught Lesson 124 on the Formation of Grace School of the Bible, we have received some correspondence answering some questions we had for Richard Jordan and Debbie Keable (Richard’s home office secretary) regarding the school. We included this information as an Addendum to the print version of Lesson 124 available on the internet. For the sake of completeness and accuracy, we are also including it here, at the beginning of Lesson 125, for the benefit of our listening and viewing audience.
- Tuesday, January 21, 2014, I sent an email to Pastor Richard Jordan and Debbie Keable asking the following questions regarding GSB.
  - How many countries worldwide have outlets of GSB?
  - What are the names of these countries?
  - Do you know approximately how many people have graduated from GSB over the years?
- Monday, January 27, 2014 email reply from Debbie Keable
  - “We have not been answering you about how many GSB students there have been because we don't really have an answer. How many hundreds (or maybe one or two thousand?) over 30+ years is hard to say. Many have come and gone off our mailing list, but we currently have 700 on our U.S. mailing list.”
  - “We also have at least a few hundred students studying GSB in prisons, either as a group or individually and do not have applications on file for the majority of them. We have, or have had, students in other countries as well: Canada, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Scotland, Switzerland. Des Strydom has students studying under his direction in a few countries in Africa. Bob Barlow had some GSB classes translated into Mandarin and has students studying in China, some in English and some in Mandarin. Johny Varghese has his Grace India website and has a few hundred Indian students studying there in English and Malayalam. There may be a group studying in Belize but we are not sure, and we just found out that a believer hopes to start a group in Haiti once classes are translated into Haitian Creole (whether that will ever happen we can't say).”
- Monday, January 27, 2014 email reply from Richard Jordan
  - “We currently have about 700 active units in the US. The difficulty knowing the exact number of students is that a good number of these are group classes. For example, Rick has a group in his church: it is his branch; he operates it to fit his needs, we simply provide the curriculum; individual students are overseen by/responsible to him and the

leadership there. Because of our conviction that training should be local church based, this has always been our vision for the school. When there is no local church, we of course oversee students from our office.

By the way, I don't recall if we discussed this paradigm at any length, but the Pauline Ministry Model of local - church - based - training is at the heart of what I have sought to do in this ministry. Moving away from this pattern, in my mind at least, is a major unnoticed factor in the fractured and dysfunctional nature of what once was called the grace movement.”

- “Our first foreign graduate was in Singapore. The country with the most is the Philippines, with over 100—here again the above class structure issue is involved, as we have provided at least a dozen sets of the class to various churches there. . . Canada, New Zealand, Australia, England, Switzerland, Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, Ireland, India, Dubai, Israel, Lithuania, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Puerto Rico, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Fiji can be added as of now. Most of these are individual students but at least six are multiples.”
- “And how do we count China. Over 10,000 sets of the Romans class alone has been distributed through the house church network, Bobby Barlow reached (this is his figure give to me a couple of years ago). I gave them three sets of the whole school to use as they thought best. Obviously we are not statistic driven. But this should give you some idea of what the trail looks like.”
- In addition, the email I received from Richard on 1/27/14 included a clarification of how he views “the scriptures” in Romans 16:26. The following is a documentation of that exchange.
  - RJ: “One more thing: one brother told me yesterday that you taught that I view the "prophets" in Rom 16:26 as OT prophets. Actually I view them as the prophets of Eph. 4:11 and the reference in Rom to their function in I Cor. 14:37.” (1/27/14)
  - BR: “Sorry about misspeaking about Rom. 16:26. I have always thought you were referring to the O.T. prophets. Did you ever teach it that way? That prophets in verse 26 were the O.T. prophets? Maybe I wasn't listening or something. I still don't think it changes the fact that one needs to understand the prophetic program to be established. Does it? Anyway I will correct the statement both in print and in video/audio next Sunday.” (1/27/14)
  - RJ: “On the topic of the prophets, I sometimes have probably been a bit vague simply because it gets a bit involved to get the details out. If you go back to the mss class I went into detail about "the Scriptures of the prophets" being the copies they identified, collated and produced. I often make reference to them in regard to the edification design as being "the rest of Scripture," referencing the fact that deified saints should be now able to grasp

the relationship of the two programs. A roundabout way of almost saying close to what you said. I just wanted you be aware of the shades of my vagaries!” (2<sup>nd</sup> email 1/27/14)

### **The Grace Alternatives (Grace Life)**

- Richard said that when he moved to Chicago in 1979, he understood some of the teachings that would later be termed the Grace Alternatives, Grace Life, or Pure Grace (coined by the Filipino saints) doctrines. Jordan already understood that I John 1:9 was not for the body of Christ when he started working for Stam at the BBS. In addition, Jordan said that he understood some things about Grace Motivation as opposed to legalism upon arriving in Chicago.
- It was the Total Forgiveness issue that first landed Jordan in hot water with some in the BBF/BBS circle of the Grace Movement. Early on during his tenure (1981 or 1982, he couldn't remember for sure which) at the BBS, Richard was given a question during the Q&A time at the Cedar Lake Conference on I John 1:9. Having witnessed that same question being asked for the previous three years, Jordan stood up and said that he was going to give a different answer. He made the following three points:
  - John was one of the Twelve Apostles not sent but to lost sheep of the house of Israel.
  - How many times can one be cleansed from ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS? This is a salvation verse for Israel during the tribulation.
  - My little children already have their sins forgiven. There is no such thing as Parental Forgiveness.
- Richard ended by talking about the Total Forgiveness that members of the body of Christ enjoy based upon Romans 3 and 4. Upon completion of his answer, the moderator came up and spent thirty minutes rebuking Richard for his answer and explaining why that was not what the Conference believed. When the meeting was dismissed, Jordan said he was mobbed by people sitting in the congregation wanting to thank him for finally saying what they were hoping someone would say for the past ten years. What Jordan learned from this was that the leadership of the BBF/BBS and the people were not at the same place in understanding. Richard realized that many of the preachers were not free on this matter because Pastor Win Johnson and Pastor Stam taught the keeping of short accounts and one was not supposed to disagree with them.
- In retrospect, Jordan said that these events at the Cedar Lake Conference in the early 80s were the first signs of what was to come within the BBF/BBS circle with respect to the discovery of the Grace Alternative doctrines. Richard said the final conversation that he had with Stam before resigning from the BBS was about the Grace Life issues, not the Bible issue.
- Richard said that he was learning more about the Grace Life doctrines as he was studying for the classes in the PTC. He said that if you watch the school tapes (Romans 8:26-27) you will see him struggle to put into words in certain places what he was thinking. In other words he said that he no longer believed what has traditionally been taught but he did not quite know how to state in words his new understanding. It was the students in the PTC that were instrumental in flushing

out these critical doctrines as they studied this TOGETHER. Richard stated that the single greatest privilege of teaching the PTC classes was the ability to study the Bible with men whom he had taught as his peers.

- In my interview, Jordan described the emergence of the Grace Life doctrines as the result of the collusion between two great principles: 1) the sufficiency of the cross and the grace of God, and 2) the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Different men stressed different principals in their individual study which were later combined to form some truly profound new understandings.
  - Jordan—the sufficiency of the cross and the grace of God
  - Tracey Plessinger and others—the sufficiency of the Scriptures
- During the early days of the PTC, Richard and his students would meet every other month on a Monday night to study subjects unrelated to their course work. They generated a list of topics that they wanted to know more about and would spend two months studying them and then come back for discussion. New topics would be added to the bottom of the list each month. At the same time, Jordan was networking with pockets of believers around the country via the regional Bible conferences he was attending. Eventually, the video students of the PTC would attend these regional meetings where discussion would take place about what was being learned elsewhere around the country. After the end of the first year of the PTC, the students went on a retreat in Wisconsin. The following year they were joined by video students. This was the origin of the April Soldiers Training for Service Meeting. Jordan would, in turn, encourage the men to attend the Cedar Lake Conference in July. By the end of his time at the BBS, there were about sixty students at the Cedar Lake Conference that were associated with Richard and the PTC.
- Richard described two groups of men who joined in on these discussions. The first group was the original students of the PTC. The second group was video students and men that Jordan networked with via the regional Bible conferences.
  - First Group: Ted Fellows, Chuck Wilcher, Art Johnson, Dick Stator, Chris Markko, and Alex Kurz (joined six months after the classes started)
  - Second Group: John Verstegen, John and Fred Bekkemeyer, Russ Hargett, Tracy Plessinger, and Keith Blades
- Developing a strict chronology regarding the development of the Grace Life issues has proved to be more elusive than we originally hoped. We can present the following general chronology.
  - Total Forgiveness—believers do not need to keep short accounts and confess their sins according to I John 1:9.
  - Spiritual Gifts—at the 1984 Cedar Lake Conference, Jordan overheard Pastor Floyd Baker make a statement that “I am not a gift to anybody. God does not give imperfect

gifts.” This prompted Jordan to begin reevaluating his thinking on the gifts in Ephesians 4. This was described as a process occurring over a number of years.

- Prayer—in 1984 Jordan preached a series of studies to the saints at Shorewood on the subject of Pauline prayer. Jordan realized that the main issue with prayer was not what one says to God but what one expects God to do for them when they pray.
- Two issues increasingly drove a wedge between Jordan and Stam: prayer and healing. It was during a noon prayer meeting with Stam that Jordan realized just how much he and Stam had drifted apart on these issues. Stam wanted to pray that the Lord would protect the BBS building from vandalism. To which Richard asked, “How exactly were they expecting that God was going to do that?” Stam responded by saying, “See, you do not believe God wrote Hebrews so you do not believe you have a guardian angel.”
- Regarding the second issue of healing, Jordan told me that Stam used to watch Jimmy Swaggart. One day Stam told Jordan that the only difference between Stam and Swaggart on the subject of healing was that Swaggart said God MUST heal people while Stam maintained that he MIGHT.
- It is easy to see that, as the 1980s wore on, Stam and Jordan would not be able to work with one another much longer. We will consider more on this subject in the next lesson.