



2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen 1:2)

Burial at Sea from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer:

¶ *The same Office may be used; but instead of the Sentence of Committal, the Minister shall say,*

UNTO Almighty God we commend the soul of our brother departed, and we commit his body to the deep; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the sea shall give up her dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

With apologies to my old friends of West Point, I again turn to an old Navy tradition that I find uplifting to my soul – the Burial at Sea. It is inspiring for the gravity and reverence with which it takes place. The sea is a far deeper grave than any landlubber can afford. Added to this fact is the mysterious nature of the deep of the sea. If we consider the traditional depth of the earthen grave to be six feet – a rule laid down by the Lord Mayor of London in 1665 to prevent the spread of the plague – we can readily see that the sea-grave is far deeper. In fact, if the deceased is buried in the Western North Pacific over the Mariana Trench, the grave would be almost seven miles in depth (35,743 feet).

But there is a far greater depth to the spiritual meaning of the term, DEEP, when mentioned in God's Word. The Word of God is not only infinite in endurance, but infinite in depth of meaning. As an illustration, I will relate a humorous, but true, story of an old Navy friend of mine from the days of Tonkin Gulf. He was aboard the USS Constellation aircraft carrier at sea enroute its assigned station near Tonkin Gulf during the Vietnam War. Walking near the stern of the deck, he saw a young sailor beholding

the wake of the ship and the broad, unbroken horizon. "Quite a large sea, isn't it?" asked my friend. "Yes, sir, it is, and just to think – we can only see the top of it!" That seems a bit silly, but it is not silly when the spiritual ramifications are considered in comparison to God's Word.

Our depth of understanding depends on our depth of diligent study in the immeasurable Deep of God's Word. The Christian soul buried at sea, or in the depth of the Spirit, may well call as out to His Maker as did the Psalmist: *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.* (Psalm 42:6-7) The ordeal of Jonah in the belly of the whale is not unlike the trials of David as he searches his own heart and spirit in the Deep of God's purpose and meaning for him. The billows roar and build, as the wet and piercing storms flood the surface of the sea with torrential rains. These are very like the sorrows of life that seem to overwhelm the Godly man as he struggles for to grasp God's message in it all.

This lamenting prayer of David is preceded in this same Psalm by these words of persevering faith: *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* (Psalm 42:1-5)

The superficial Christian who believes he has met his duty by simply sitting an hour in church each week and hearing a bit of scripture read to him as he half dozes in the pew, has no depth of soul or spirit whatsoever. He does not love God and His Word sufficiently to prove all things by the Holy Word of God. We have ample counsel in Scripture to command us to study with diligence:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15) It is shameful to be so ignorant of the Word of the Lord as to need to be spoon-fed only by a minister from pulpit on Sundays; especially in view of the grave errors being preached today from many of those pulpits. *10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.* (Acts 17:10-12) Believing faith comes from diligent Bible study. If we have so little regard for the word so as not to take the time to both read and study, we are poor indeed. The Word of God came at great expense of the prophets and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ who died in redeeming us according to the Scriptures. Reverence and love is essential to the Christian life.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:19-21) The overriding purpose of that diligence in study is to prepare us to see that Day Star which shall dawn to all who believe unto salvation.

The DEEP things of God cannot be acquired by superficial reading. The Word of God must be read as the Love Letter that it truly is. Having God's Law written in the

soft sinews of our hearts are reinforced by repetitive strokes of the chisel of the Word to make more stark gravings thereon. *1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. (Psalm 17:1)*

Righteousness is more than a habit, but it is habitual, nonetheless. The more often we reprimand Satan and do right, the easier the next victory over that Old Serpent becomes. Digesting the Word of God at the deepest seat of the soul will build a solid wall of protection around our souls. Before a brain surgeon becomes so, he must study in great depth over many years. Should less be expected of the Bible scholar?

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (Romans 10:12-18)