

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Jesus: Our “Underwriter”

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Greek youngsters were taught to write during ancient times when writing materials were not as plentiful and comparatively expensive. Students would have a wax tablet with a stylus which was pointed on one end and flat on the other. The pointed end was used to write on the soft wax, and the flat end was used to smooth over the wax so the tablet could be used again.

The writing teachers would either write a sentence with a moral message or a line containing the important letters of the Greek alphabet at the top of the tablet. The teacher would also draw parallel lines on the tablet in which the student would write. The student would then take their stylus and follow the pattern of making each letter, keeping their writing straight by staying within the parallel lines.

Willaim Barclay in his work entitles, *New Testament Words*, informs us not only of the above way of teaching Greek young people to write from Plato, but he also speaks of a way learned from Quintilian in his work, *Education of an Orator*. The teacher would write the letters on the student’s wax tablet and then the student

would follow the grooves of the master’s work with his own hand. At first, the student’s hand was placed over the teacher’s hand as each letter was traced, then the student, “guided along the grooves,” could follow the pattern, not “straying beyond the boundary” (page 139-140).

The line the teacher would provide for the student, and that which the student was to follow was called the “*hupo-grammos*,” literally meaning, “*the underwriting*.”

There is only one time this word occurs in the New Testament. Peter uses the word in pointing to Jesus who left us “an example...” (*hupo-grammos*) that we should follow his steps” (*1 Peter 2:21*).

These steps are not easy, for they are taken in the context of persecution and suffering. The Christian may have to suffer wrongfully for doing right (*1 Peter 2:19*). It would be understandable to do wrong and be buffeted for the wrong. But in living in good conscience, one has done nothing wrong but lives as God directs, and he or she is still punished by others. Can he

or she endure such suffering patiently? Yes, because one has already written the line to follow, and we can walk in the grooves of Jesus’ steps. “*who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*” (*1 Peter 2:22-23*).

Jesus as the master teacher has drawn the parallel lines so our walk can be straight, and has shown us the pattern to follow in difficult times. He did not retaliate with evil when wronged by others, but with the mental stroke of the stylus, He committed Himself to the hands of God who will judge all men “righteously.” God will handle “the wrong,” so we can continue in lines “of right.”

In times of suffering for doing right, we need a gentle hand helping us to remain in the grooves. Paul received assurance when His thorn in the flesh was not removed. He had a comforting hand to follow as he traced out the letters of life: “*My grace is sufficient for thee*” (*2 Corinthians 12:9*). Jesus is a great “underwriter!”