

The Herald of His Grace

lssue 130

Fear

An Elementary Education

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ..." (Psalms 111:10).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ..." (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ..." (Proverbs 9:10).

ne thing that should stand out to us in the three verses above is that fear is only the "beginning" of wisdom and knowledge. It is only man's starting place with God, his Creator.

Many miss this important truth, and in doing so, they overlook the pure *elementary* nature of fear. The "fear of the Lord" is mankind's first approach to God. It is the awesome discovery of who we really are, and who He really is. It is humanity's approach to God in infancy and immaturity – seeing Him as the righteous almighty One!

Note carefully the first verse that we quoted above, along with the next phase that is to follow:

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that **do His commandments** ..." (Psalms 111:10).

We see the connection between "the fear of the Lord" and doing "His commandments." The "commandments," or the "law," is associated with fear.

When God gave "the law of commandments" at Sinai the children of Israel "trembled" in fear; but the "law" and its natural fear in relationship to God was only divine elementary education. It was

simply a "schoolmaster" to bring us to the Lord Jesus Christ (and who among us has not feared the schoolmaster!)

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25).

Because the "schoolmaster" has brought us to Christ, we are no longer enrolled in its elementary process of "fear."

As mature, adult "<u>sons</u> of God," our childish, immature "<u>children</u> of God" "fear" of the Father is replaced by the fullness of "love."

Little wonder Paul wrote:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7).

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My Siblings!

Greetings dear family; my love to each of you. What a rich joy to be sons of the Father, and brothers together with our Lord Jesus Christ!

This Issue

Along with an article by E.W. Bullinger, in this issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook* we are bringing you two articles I have written on very important topics. Both ultimately have to do with the very nature of our Father. How we understand these subjects is rooted in our view of who He really is. These two subjects have long been upon my heart and I have finally taken the time to address them. It is my great joy to bring them to you in these pages.

"Not Many" Ministry

Every now and then we have one of our readers inquire as to the size of our circulation. We assure them that the Lord has given us a "not many" ministry (see I Corinthians 1:26-29).

God's work through time is not about calling the masses of mankind unto Himself; if so He has failed miserably. His work is in calling a small, "firstfruits." Do not be discouraged though, for the full harvest will be reaped, with no one left out. It will be the joyous privilege of the "firstfruits" to be the vessels of the Father in bringing in the rest of creation's harvest. We are now in the stage of our divine preparation.

Diminished in Size

Many times God's method is one of *reduction*. Gideon's 30,000 soldiers were too many for God to use, so He "cleared the decks," sending 29,700 back home, leaving only 300 to do His work

So it has been with our work. In the early days of the *Bible Student's Notebook*, it was in its "heyday." Yet progressively as God has called us through many transitions to truth it has drastically affected the size of its circulation. Our current readership is about 1% of its peak volume. We have been diminished in size.

We are not discouraged by this diminishing, for God has given us the heavenly perspective. We realize that only those who have "ears to hear" can. We are content to share what God has given us, with those whom God has prepared to hear them.

A Personal Journey

For as long as I can remember I have known that God has called me. As a young boy I assumed that since He was going to use me, it would be in the only way that I knew, as a "Reverend." The Egypt of the religious system would indeed be a part of His

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Bible Student's Notebook

ISSN: 1936-9360 No. 130 – April 3, 2008

This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization" or "mission."

SUBSCRIPTION

Electronic Version (e-mailed to you): 1 Year (52 issues) – \$10; 2 Years (104 issues) – \$20 PrintedVersion(mailedtoyou): ½ Year (26 issues) – \$25; 1 Year (52 issues) – \$50

PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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Hear these words! "God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear!"

God has not given us a place as fearful children. Fear has *no* place in our relationship with the Father. We have been given a place of mature, adult *sonship*. What He has given us in replacement of elementary "fear" is power, love and a sound mind.

John wrote of this as well:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18)

Hear these words as well. "There is **no** fear in love." None!

There is no place for "fear" in the life of the mature believer, for he has been completely submerged in the glorious love of the Father – "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

The very definition of our Father is Love – "God is Love" (I John 4:8, 16). He is Love, in fact He is perfect Love – and "perfect love casteth out fear."

Fear and love are exclusive of each other. The issue is one of really knowing who God is; of actually getting to know *Him*.

Our first approach to God is in ignorance and fear. Then, as we come to known Him in truth – as we become acquainted with His genuine nature of love – fear is driven from our lives, for "perfect love **casteth out** fear."

Only those who do not yet know Him, or do not yet know Him very well, fear Him, for "he that feareth is **not** made perfect in love."

Now, there are actually three stages related to the "fear of God" that we might refer to as:

Pre-School Elementary Post-Graduate

We have looked briefly at the last two of these stages. The "Elementary" stage is the early stage of knowing God. It is the acknowledging that there is a God, and is usually associated with the law (or legalism and religion). This stage is exemplified by those in the "Gospels" who "were sore afraid."

We have also looked at the "Post-Graduate" stage. This is the stage of maturity where the believer no longer lives under the "the fear of God," but enjoys the knowledge of God in fullness. This is the divine goal of perfect love.

There is however an earlier, "Pre-School" stage that sometimes is a predecessor of the "Elementary School" stage. For some, this stage comes before the basic knowledge that there is a God. This is the denial or total disregard of God. It is "Pre-School" because it is "pre-law," or "pre-religion." It is the "fool" stage that says "there is no God" (Psalm 53:1), resulting in "No fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18).

We might review these three stages as follows:

Pre-School	Denial or Total Disregard of God	Fool	"No fear of God before their eyes"
Elementary	Basic Ac- knowledg- ment that there is a God	Infant	"They were sore afraid"
Post- Graduate	Knowing God in Fullness	Adult	"God hath not given us the spirit of fear"

When our Lord Jesus Christ was here on the earth, His most often repeated instruction to those who heard Him was "Fear Not!" – "Fear Ye Not!" – "Be Not Afraid!" He came to lead others out of fear and into the freedom and peace of love. He lived in a place of perfect Love – that place was His Father.

Getting to know the Father in the reality of His Love will *mature* us out of "fear" and into "perfect love" – a love that is all consuming. No wonder Fanny Crosby wrote in her hymn, Blessed Assurance, that we are "Filled with His goodness, lost in His Love."

We who really know Him are overtaken by the sea of His divine Love.

Frederick M. Lehman penned his marvelous hymn in 1917:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

When hoary time shall pass away, And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall, When men who here refuse to pray, On rocks and hills and mountains call, God's love so sure, shall still endure, All measureless and strong; Redeeming grace to Adam's race – The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure – The saints' and angels' song.

Are you afraid of the Loving Father? Then you do not yet know Him for who He *really* is. Something of ignorance, religion, and tradition has you bound to a false view of Him.

It is time to know the liberating freedom that is available in the full-growth-knowledge of Him in power, love, and a sound mind.

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Now, to help us and make us look to Christ we have a blessed Hope given to us, a hope in Christ. This will ensure our looking to Him. This brings us to the special object of Philippians 3. (See I Thessalonians 1:10, "to wait for His Son from heaven.")

3. The Christian's Hope – To be like Christ (:20-21)

"Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (:20-21).

Here our hope is presented in a manner quite as characteristic as our standing and our object. If our standing is to be *found* in Christ, then our object is to *know* Christ, and our hope is to be *like* Christ. Our hope is not the glory of the Kingdom, but "the

Saviour"; not the "Restoration of Israel," but Israel's King; and when we see Him, we shall be like Him (I John 3:1, 2). That is the hope presented here.

Here we have a "body of humiliation," but we shall be changed. There we shall have a body like His own glorious Body – for we shall be like Him.

Here we have a body in which we groan, but we shall be changed. There we shall be free from all sin and sorrow, for we shall be like Him.

Here we have a body of suffering and death, but we shall be changed, *There* we shall have a body of immortality and life, *for* we shall be like Him.

This is our hope. No sooner do we find ourselves in Christ as our righteousness, than we desire to know Him as our Object, and look for Him as our Hope.

The Christian's Standing, Object and Hope

by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

"Brethren, be ye followers together of me" (Philippians 3:17).

"Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do" (Philippians 4:9).

It is interesting to note the *character* in which Paul, by the Holy Spirit, speaks to us in the passages quoted. In the Epistles to the Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and I and II Timothy, he calls himself "Apostle." In I and II Thessalonians he uses no term at all in regard to himself. In Philemon, he is "a prisoner of Jesus Christ," and in Philippians, only, "a servant of Jesus Christ."

So that when he writes and speaks here, and says, "be ye followers of me," he speaks not as one endowed with extraordinary gifts, or one privileged to see unspeakable visions, not as a laborious Apostle, nor as a gifted vessel, but as the "Servant of Jesus Christ," the simple Christian. We could not follow him in his labors as an Apostle, in his rapture to the third heaven and Paradise; but we can follow him in his simple Christian character as a servant, and this Epistle where he exhorts us to follow him, is the only Epistle in which he thus describes himself simply as a servant. It is true that in Romans he styles himself a "servant of Jesus Christ," but he adds, "called to be an Apostle;" and in Titus, "a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ."

Three things are revealed in Philippians chapter 3 as making the perfect character of a true Christian. They are like the three things of I Thessalonians 1:9-10.

1. The Christian's Standing – Turning from idols (:9)

"Found in Him" (Philippians 3:9). This is the Christian's standing. Nothing less, nothing lower, nothing different. Not partly in Christ and partly in a "church," but "found in Him." It is in Christ that we must be found, in His righteousness. Like stones in the Temple, hid in Christ. If we are not found in Him, it matters little where else

we are. If we are found in Him, it matters little where we are *not* found. Oh, to be found "in Him," in our own experience! This, then, is the proper Christian *standing* (See also Galatians 2:15-24).

2. The Christian's Object – To serve the living and true God (:9).

"That I may know Him" (Philippians 3:10). Here, again, true Christianity throws us back on Christ, and takes up the thoughts from :8. Our object is not this or that "church," or this or that work, but Christ Himself in His own glorious Person.

As to the natural man, all is different. The ancient philosophy had a motto continually sounding in its ears, "Know thyself." This saying was introduced by Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece, and the wisest of them all. A lawgiver, a great reformer, and a great patriot, 638 years before Christ, Solon gave this as his most precious wisdom. It was carved over all the schools and seats of learning, its letters may be seen today carved in the marble ruins of Greece. It was good, so far as man's wisdom went - it was the best that man could do! - but oh how impossible to obey it! It is the one thing man never could do. It is the one thing none of us know. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) If we could know ourselves thus, what then? When we came to this knowledge, and saw ourselves and our ruin, would it not end in despair? No, we can only know ourselves by the knowledge of Christ.

Christianity came and brought with it a loftier motto, a heavenly wisdom, a Divine truth: "That I may know Him." Why? Because it is only by comparing ourselves with that which is perfect that we can form a true

judgment (II Corinthians 10:12). How can we know whether anything measures what it ought to? Only by bringing it to the standard. How can we tell whether a weight is correct? Only by putting it in the balances. How can we tell whether anything is perfectly upright or perpendicular? Only by applying a plumbline to it. How can we tell whether anything is perfectly straight or horizontal? Only by applying a straight edge, or a spirit level to it.

We could never tell, though we tried for years, unless we applied the true test. We might *think* a thing was right measure; we might *believe* a thing was right weight; but we could not possibly *know* it. So it is with ourselves. We might study ourselves all our lives, we might compare ourselves with others – I *might fancy* I was this, or *hope* I was that, or *believe* I was the other, but apart from Christ's perfect standard, I could never *know* it.

Hence we see the highest earthly wisdom is at fault. This was the best it could do, but it was a failure! Not until Christianity came could a man know himself. Why? Because Christianity is Christ. Tried by other standards we might compare more or less favorably, but tried by Christ, God's standard, tried by Christ, God's glory, there is only one result for all. "All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God." That is why we must be "found in Him," not having our own righteousness, but covered over with His righteousness. Here the desire of the Apostle is the object of the Christian, and this is Christ, always CHRIST, only CHRIST. Alas! How many have other objects, how many are occupied with lower objects!

Paul's Spiritual Gain

We have considered Paul's *natural* advantages, which he once considered his *gains*, but which he had learned to count as loss. We now come to his real *spiritual gain*. In Philippians 3 we learn what this was, viz., "The power of Christ's resurrection."

Paul knew he had died with Christ, and had risen with Christ, but he wanted to know (to *get* to know) what the *power* of Christ's resurrection was, what it meant to his own life and service. Too many are occupied with the church and its service; Paul wanted to be occupied with Christ's service, with the things of Christ. Even the Word of God is useless without Christ, for "the letter killeth." The one great reason of the lowness of Christian walk is that the eye is taken off from Christ, and rests on some lower object, either on one's self, or on others, or on one's service. Now Paul's object

was one (:13). "This one thing I do," whether he was resting or travelling, making tents or planting churches, Christ was his object (:10). At home or abroad, by sea or by land, by night or by day, alone or with others, "This one thing I do;" and this, remember, not as the Apostle, not as the enraptured Saint, but as the Servant, the one who addresses us in the words of the passages quoted.

Nor should we ever be satisfied with anything lower than this. True, we all fail sadly. Why? Why do we fail in other things? What were we told when we learned to write? "Look at the copy." The copybook had a line of perfectly-shaped letters printed at the top, we looked at it, and perhaps our first line was fairly well done, but what was our tendency? Each line we looked at the last we had written, instead of looking at the copy, so the writing grew worse and worse. This is our tendency in the spiritual life. We copy one another: we are copies of copies, instead of copies of Christ. No! Christ must be our object, and this includes all else. In this way alone can we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Ephesians 4:10).

Christ is our *strength* as well as our righteousness. In the Lord have I righteousness *and* strength. This being so, it is our adversary's one aim to keep us from Christ. To accomplish this, he will occupy the *sinner* with his *sins*; he will occupy the *penitent* with his *repentance*; he will occupy the *believer* with his *faith*, as though it and not the *Object* of it were the ground of his salvation. He will occupy the *servant* with his *service*; and the *saint* with his *holiness*. It matters not what it is, anything can be used for the same end, and if the end is not gained by one thing it is by another: *Christ is* shut out of view.

How many Christians are taken up with something short of Christ! They are occupied with their holiness instead of with the Holy One; they are occupied with the promises instead of with the Promiser; they are occupied with the blessing instead of with the Blesser. Yet having Him we have everything. The promises of God "in Him are yea and in Him Amen." His holiness is mine. His blessing is mine. The full occupation with a Heavenly Object will alone make us Heavenly without an effort. We have not to try to be this or that: we "beholding … are changed" (II Corinthians 3:18). Nothing else will form our character. It is the object that forms the character; therefore "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus …" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

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Saved By Fire!

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. "Saved, yet so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:15).

any see God's judgments as an end within themselves, rather than a means to an end. There are coming some wonderful days in the future, days of divine judgment when God shall apply the refiner's fire to His creation. As in the due process of gold and silver's refinement, these days will forever remove all the stains, disgraces and sins of the "former things."

Refinement's purging fire is indeed a most gracious act, producing a gloriously positive loss. It will remove all that wishes to be forgotten. As God in His forgiveness remembers them no more, so "the former things are passed away."

GOD IS LOVE

"God is love" (I John 4:8). "God is love" (I John 4:16).

John gives us a definitive statement about God. Here we have presented to us the plain, clear definition of God of who He is. Could anything be more direct and to the point?

"God is Love." Love is what He is. Love is who He is. It is not that God's character is simply a loving one; that love is one of His attributes. Neither is it that love is His occasional quality; that sometimes His nature of love gives way to "wrath." No, indeed not!

God does not simply love: He **is** Love! Love is not just one of His attributes: Love is who He is!

Even "wrath" is the manifest passion of His love, for Love is who He is, and it is the sum-total of all His ways and workings with His creation. "Wrath" and "judgment" are not ends unto themselves; they are His wise means to an end – the victorious loving of His creation to Himself.

GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

"For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

We are also told that God is a consuming fire. Is this a contradiction of what John wrote, that He is love? No, indeed not! The same God who is Love is also a consuming fire. He is a consuming fire of divine love. That is the only answer, if Love is who He is.

That God is a "consuming fire" wonderfully demonstrates the great passion of His love. His is a "consuming" love; and His love is a "purging, purifying" love. His is a love that knows no retreat; knows no end; knows no defeat. He conquers all, not with pure might and strength, not with pure wrath and judgment; but with pure, undying, unrelenting, unceasing, unconditional love.

"Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:8).

"The greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13:13).

Love is the greatest, because He is Love – and He is the greatest.

Love never fails, because He is Love – and He never fails

SAVED BY FIRE

We who know the true and living God, the God of absolute Love, welcome **everything** that comes from His hand, even His "wrath" and "judgment"; for He **is** Love.

As believers we should welcome the day when our works shall be revealed by "fire"; for it is a loving fire that comes from the hands of our Father. He will love away all the dross of our lives.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be **revealed by fire;** and **the fire** shall try every man's work of what sort it is... If any man's work **shall be burned,** he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; **yet so as by fire**" (I Corinthians 3:13, 15)

We "shall be saved" ... "by fire." This is what Paul wrote. God's fire of love will save us from all the stains and disgraces of the "former things" and "the former things are passed away."

Did you ever really stop to consider the glorious nature of the "fire" at the Judgment Seat of Christ?¹ Did you ever consider it in relationship to the "Lake of Fire" for example?

God's future judgment of believers is associated with "fire."

God's future judgment of unbelievers is associated with "fire."

Fire is such wonderful blessing to our daily lives. We make profitable use of it every day. The only *dangerous* fire – one that is to be feared – is a fire that is *out of control*. Be assured that the God who is Love, and who is a consuming fire – is *not* out of control. As Fanny Crosby wrote in her hymn, He "doeth all things well."

In the Bible fire is presented as having a purging effect. It does so many things – it cleanses, frees, reduces, refines. It is interesting how we recognize this fact when "fire" is applied to the believer, but we forget this when it is applied to the unbeliever. Just as the "fire" of the believer's judgment is a purging, purifying act of God's love; so it is with the "fire" of the unbeliever's judgment.

Think about it! Why do we as believers so often make the "fire" of the unbeliever's judgment *literal*, while we leave ours the figurative refiner's fire?

1. See the author's work, *The Glorious Presentation of the Saints*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student's Press, (Item #8778).

2. John Wright Follette, Arrows of Truth.

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preparation for me. Then He called me out ("Out of Egypt have I called my son"). Leave is all I could do. And leave I did. I moved from Hampton to Elam and then to Gladstone. During this 10 year period I became so aware that I was in His "wilderness." A wilderness of the draining of Egypt from my spirit; a wilderness of knowing Him. This too was but a part of His divine preparation. I have also known so strongly since being here in PA that God has been working on but another stage of His preparation in my life. I have sensed His operation in our lives so strongly during this period. I live day-by-day in eager anticipation of His life and the work of His wise plan. I almost hesitate to tell you how strong this expectation has been since being here in PA and how greatly it has steadily grown.

As our Andre Sneidar recently told me:

"It is amazing to go through the 'Moses,' 'Joseph' and 'Daniel' experiences. It hurts while it's happening, and we don't necessarily see how it is working to our benefit, but

The lost will thank God for the "lake of fire" that shall free them, and bring to an end their old identity in Adam. This "lake of fire" is but the further manifestation of the love of God; of the love of His consuming fire. It is defined by John as "the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Paul teaches us that, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is **death**" (I Corinthians 15:26). That's what the "lake of fire" is – it is "death." So it shall be destroyed; and the only way to "destroy" death is by "resurrection!" The "lake of fire" is just a transition from death to life.

The "fire" of both the believers' and unbelievers' judgments are but the momentary transitions of love wrapped in the beautiful analogy of "fire."

As one former pastor has written:

I do not think we are compelled to see this as a literal fire. It is a metaphor for purging, purifying, and refining. As God completes the process of restoring all things (Acts 3:21), all the old rubbish left here by the first Adam (the unrighteous deeds of fallen humanity) will be burned up. Meanwhile, redeemed humanity is welcomed into the presence of God where eventually, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away ..." (Revelation 21:4).

Yes, the Book of Revelation speaks apocalyptically of an *abyss* and *lake of fire*, but it is in the context of describing the ultimate overthrow of evil.³ ■

 Steven L. Rogers, Quit "Going" to Church ... and Other Musings of a Former Institutional Man, pages 146-150; 135

eventually we do come through it by the Lord's hand, and we finally see the benefit and blessing."

Do not be discouraged dear siblings, at God's work in us. It may seem that we are in a dark place, in a pit, on a dead end road; but God is SO just getting started with us. Trust in Him. Rest in His wise Godhood.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Your brother,

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Clyde