



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VIII
Issue 178

Seven Basic Bible Facts

Every Christian Should Know and Believe

by – Robert C. Brock

FACT #1

most important doctrine of the Bible.

That the Bible **must** be *rightly divided* in order for it to make sense.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ revealed His heart and His mind to the Apostle Paul:

Notice what it says:

*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the **revelation of Jesus Christ** (Galatians 1:11-12).*

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).*

*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that **by revelation** He made known unto me the Mystery ... (Ephesians 3:2-3).*

This is one of the cardinal rules for interpreting the whole Bible. Since our God is not the author of confusion, neglect of this rule or a faulty use of it will lead to only one result: **confusion**.

This proves conclusively that Paul did not preach what the 12 Apostles preached. Rather he went up to Jerusalem to **tell them** of the special gospel of grace that Christ gave to him (Galatians 2:2). He preached Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret, hid in God (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:9). He was the Apostle to the Gentiles and magnified his office (Romans 11:13).

The reason for a *right division* of the Bible is because of God's two distinct purposes:

- (1) His purpose concerning Israel and the world according to Prophecy, and
- (2) His purpose concerning the Gentiles in this present age according to the Mystery revealed to Paul.

God doesn't want us to confuse the teaching of these two purposes. He has very graciously given us the key for a proper understanding of this.

(see **BASIC**, page 1751)

FACT #2

That the **distinctiveness** of Pauline truth is a

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Perfect Love

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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).

What a beautiful phrase we find in this verse, “perfect love.”

Think of it! What inestimable value such a love would be.

Where could such a love as this be found? There is only one source: our Father. God perfectly loves His creation. He cannot *unlove* us; for His is divine love, a love that will never fail (I Corinthians 3:8). He is a God that cannot **not** love us; because love is Who He is!

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

The love of God can be wonderfully seen manifested through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved ordinary people just where they were. He loved fishermen, harlots and tax collectors. He even loved those who constantly put their feet in their mouths, fell asleep on the job, and denied Him.

How amazing is such “*perfect love!*” Come to know this great divine love and the result will be that “*perfect love casts out fear.*”

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalms 27:1).

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Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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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,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

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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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FACT #3

That the gospel we are to preach is called the *Gospel of the grace of God*.

*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the! ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify **the Gospel of the Grace of God** (Acts 20:24).*

This is God's only message for the lost in this present age. We are to follow Paul as he followed Christ (I Corinthians 11:1). In his writings *alone* do we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the Christian.

Some other important aspects of **grace** are:

1. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).
2. We are justified freely by His grace (Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7).
3. His grace is sufficient for us (II Corinthians 12:9).
4. We are not under Law but under grace (Romans 6:14-15).
5. This age is the age of grace (Ephesians 3:2).

FACT #4

That the Bible definitely teaches that *water baptism* was and is a part of Israel's religion (Hebrews 6:1-2; 9:10).

It was for the remission of sins and was by sprinkling (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; Ezekiel 36:25).

In this age there is only *one* baptism, not two:

*One Lord, one faith, **one baptism** (Ephesians 4:5).*

This baptism is the placing of the Christian into the Church, the Body of Christ, by the Holy Spirit:

*For by one Spirit are we all **baptized into one Body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,*

whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13).

This baptism takes place once for all at the time of salvation.

The Apostle Paul was not sent to baptize with water:

*For Christ sent me **not to baptize** but to preach the gospel ... (I Corinthians 1:17).*

Only a change in God's purpose would necessitate a statement like this. There is *no* importance attached to water baptism, today. It is *not* a part of Christianity and only causes confusion.

FACT #5

That we must understand the two-fold ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

During His earthly ministry He ministered exclusively to Israel:

But He answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

His whole ministry to the Nation was under the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:4-5). Christians are not under the Law so we are not to live according to Israel's teachings.

During His present ministry in Heaven, He is ministering according to what He revealed to the Apostle Paul. He is saving men according to His gospel of Grace. He is at the throne of grace making intercession for us (Romans 8:34). We are to live in Paul's epistles where pure Christianity is found. This is not to say we should neglect the rest of the Bible. It is all for us but not all to us (I Corinthians 10:6, 11).

FACT #6

That SIGNS belong to the Nation of Israel and its religion.

*For the **Jews require a sign**, and the Gentiles*

*(see **BASIC**, page 1756)*

Abstain from All Appearance of Evil

A Misunderstood Verse – A Freedom Robber!

by – Jeff Bowman

Years ago in my first church Judy and I went to the movies. As we dropped off our then infant son at the home of one of the church members we were asked, “Where are you going tonight?” We replied happily, “To see a movie.” At that point we knew we said something that we shouldn’t have said. There was a disappointment on their face that their pastor was going to the movies. Later it was said that they don’t go to movies because it has the “*appearance of evil*.” In my life up to that point I had never had a problem with going to see a show but now I did – thanks to them!

What does the verse mean, “*Abstain from all appearance of evil*”? (I Thessalonians 5:22).

Since that dreadful movie day I’ve heard this verse quoted to prevent Christian freedoms more than any other verse. I’ve seen it quoted against simple things like beards on men (“you know that men who wear beards are evil”), to a woman’s style of dress (“good Christian women do not wear pants to church, we are to avoid the appearance of evil”).

I’ve come to see that this little verse has become one of two large buckets for condemning something or someone that the “legalist” doesn’t like, the other being the “stumbling block” bucket! Both buckets are sweeping type statements that might be meant to help the fellow Christian but in actuality they squelch Christian freedom and ultimately evangelism. They are used when the legalist has not found a definitive Biblical response. They then say something like, “God wants us to avoid all



appearance of evil in our lives.” So it is time we examine this misused verse to see if that is what God really is saying.

After our encounter with our church member who had a problem with us going to the movies, I was driven to examine the passage that was quoted. On the surface it looked very clear: “*Abstain from all appearance of evil*” (I Thessalonians 5:22). But as I looked at the context I realized that there was more to it than simply not doing something that someone might find questionable. At the time I had picked up a wonderful book by Joseph C. Aldrich entitled *Life-Style Evangelism*. In it he addressed this very verse in a chapter called “Avoid Evil Instead of Its Appearance.” He says the following:

In the Thessalonians passage quotes, Paul is talking about prophetic utterances in the previous verses (19-21). “*Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.*” What is to be tested? The content of every prophetic utterance. What is good is to be held on to; what is evil is to be rejected. The passage is not saying never do something which looks like sin to another person. Jesus Christ frequently offended the leaders of the religious community.¹

Aldrich pointed me in the direction of the context of the passage and to allow the context to dictate what the verse was saying. Let’s see the verse in

1. Aldrich, Joseph C., *Lifestyle Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1981), p. 48.

its context:

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:19-22).

In the text the Apostle Paul is telling them to allow prophetic revelations of the Spirit, test the utterances, keep what is good and abstain from those that appear bad. It is that simple. Paul is not telling them to avoid actions that might look bad to someone else as many say today.

So what do other Biblical Scholars and commentaries say?

Here are a few.

William Hendriksen says regarding verses 19-22:

The reason for this disparagement of prophetic utterance can readily be surmised. Wherever God plants wheat, Satan sows his tares ... Paul, therefore, states what course of action the congregation should take: "*Prophetic utterances do not despise, but test all things.*" ... Once a true verdict has been reached, the practical rule must apply: "*to the good hold on; from every form of evil hold off.*"²

The Expositors Bible Commentary:

From Paul's next prohibition, "*Do not treat prophecies with contempt,*" it appears that the Christians at Thessalonica like those at Corinth (I Corinthians 14:1) had underrated the gift of prophecy ... Apparently, however, certain "idle" brothers (:14; c.f. 4:11-12) had misused this gift by falsifying data regarding the Lord's return. This had soured the remainder of the flock against prophecy in general ... Paul stipulates that all ... manifestations be tested with a view to accepting what is valid and disallowing what is not (:21-21) ... Allowance must also be made for professed spiritual manifestations that

2. Hendriksen, William, *New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), pp. 140.

do not contribute but rather detract from the development of the local body ... "*Hold fast*" to the good, but "*hold yourselves free from*" every kind of evil that tries to parade as a genuine representation of the Spirit.³

Hogg and Vine state:

... But if, on being tested, the tongue, prophesying or teaching, was not approved, the saints were to turn away therefrom.⁴

And lastly, New Testament Greek Scholar A.T. Robertson in summary says:

Abstain from every form of evil ... Evil had a way of showing itself even in the spiritual gifts, including prophecy.⁵

So why have Christians misused this passage? I think it is their failure to get the context. I know it was mine! Yet once the context is read we can see what Paul was saying and it isn't that we avoid "questionable" behavior.

The problem with saying that Christians should avoid "questionable behavior" is that we have all kinds of opinions as to what is or is not questionable behavior. Obviously we are not talking about *sin* or wrongs as described and given by God. We most definitely are to avoid disobeying God. But when it comes down to matters of Christian freedom and liberty then this misapplication of I Thessalonians 5:22 must be challenged. I might not like what you do but if it isn't sin I should keep my mouth shut and allow you to enjoy your freedom in Christ. It is amusing to me, now that I've been a believer for over 30 years, how many things I've seen be "evil" to one generation of believers are not to the next. I can remember when guitars (even acoustic) were

(see **APPEARANCE**, page 1756)

3. *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Volume 11, Thomas, Robert L. "1 Thessalonians" (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corporation, 1978), pp. 292-293.
4. Hogg, C.F. and Vine, W.E., *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians* (Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, 1914), pp. 200.
5. Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament – Vol. 4, The Epistles of Paul* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 38.

The Spiritual Order of Paul's Church Epistles

by – William R. Newell (1868-1956)

We believe that the order of arrangement of Paul's Epistles to the Churches was Divinely established; and that there is a *progress of spiritual experience* from Romans to II Thessalonians.



weak then am I strong,” and, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Many believers never find that God alone is their strength along every line. Paul found it! (Read 1:8-10).

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (4:7-11).

Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (4:16).

Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus (7:5-6).

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (12:9).

Romans: Righteousness Without Works

In Romans man is shown without righteousness: *“There is none righteous, no, not one.”* This involves man's fundamental relation to God. Christ is set forth a propitiation, and by His death releasing man from the necessity of a righteousness and holiness of his own. Christ becomes his righteousness, and a believer has the witness of the Spirit that he is God's child.

I CORINTHIANS: Wisdom Without Education

In I Corinthians the subject is wisdom. The words *“wisdom”* and *“wise”* occur in the first four chapters twenty-five times, and the words *“foolish”* and *“foolishness”* some eight times! The wisdom of the world is *“foolishness,”* – therefore God's *“wisdom”* is revealed (2:6-16). In 1:30 we are seen as of God – we that are in Christ Jesus who was *“made unto us wisdom from God;”* which indeed includes *“Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption”* but Christ is looked at as our Wisdom. Indeed, in 2:16, *“We have the mind of Christ.”*

II CORINTHIANS: Power Without Strength

In II Corinthians we find Christ our sufficiency. The key verses here are 12:9-10: *“When I am*

GALATIANS:

Perfecting Without Religion

The Galatians are seeking to be perfected, but it is by turning back to religion, by observing *“days, and months, and times, and years”* (4:10-11). *“Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?”* (3:3). But Paul goes clear back to Romans six truth, and testifies to these Galatians,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me (2:20).

He goes back to the truth of II Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

There he sets before us the proper rule of life of the believer in words which completely set aside “religious life,” whether Jewish, Romish, or Protestant.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (6:15-16).

EPHESIANS:

Men on Earth Seated in the Heavlies

In Ephesians the marvelous secret is opened out by which all true believers in Christ Jesus are made alive with the raised and glorified Christ – raised up with Him and made to sit in the heavlies (no longer in the earthlies as were Israel) and made indeed to become the fullness of Christ our Head, Who fills all in all.

PHILIPPIANS:

A Sample Believer Runs the Course

In Philippians we see Paul as a sample believer of all these glorious truths, running the wonderful “course” toward that coming “day of Christ” (1:6, 10)! Saying, as he runs, “To me to live is Christ” (1:21); exhorting, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5-8); crying, as he runs,

I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him, the power of His

resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death. I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ... For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven ... I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me ... My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Chapter 3, entire; 4:13, 19).

Paul’s word in 3:17, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample,” is the key of Philippians. By the grace of God certainly, but none the less true, Paul was enabled to run the Christian race in all its fullness!

COLOSSIANS:

Heavenly Men on Earth Filled with His Fullness

In Colossians we see heavenly men on earth – yet holding fast the Head in heaven, and becoming filled with His fullness. All the fullness of God dwells bodily in Christ, with Whom believers’ lives are hid in God, and Christ becomes the object of all the believer’s thoughts and affections. Since you are raised together with Christ,

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (3:2-3).

The believer is content not to be known or manifested until the glory of Christ comes. Four desperate foes oppose this mystery of faith of holding fast the Head in heaven while walking on earth: beguilement through enticing words; philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men; the ritual observance of outward ordinances and holy days; the worshipping of angels (2:4, 8, 16, 18).

(see ORDER, next page)

ORDER (continued from Previous page)

I & II THESSALONIANS: The Believer's Blessed Hope

In I and II Thessalonians Paul gives us the believer's hope – the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord! Wherefore comfort one another with these words (4:16-18).

The believer who knows himself righteous (Romans), having the mind of Christ (I Corinthians), who has

APPEARANCE (continued from page 1753)

said to have the appearance of evil. Drums were not allowed in church, then they became allowed in Sunday night services and now they are found in the morning service of every growing church!

Were these things really evil? Not to God! The sad thing is that today's young Christians, who do things once taboo by the older generation, still find "the appearance of evil" in things that are pure and of no consequence to God.

So you might disagree with your fellow Christian who likes to dance, smoke cigars, has tattoos, enjoys a glass of wine or a beer for dinner, has piercings, or even drives a nice car (and "yes" I've heard this verse quoted in regards to the type of car one drives!), but

BASIC (continued from page 1751)

seek after wisdom (I Corinthians 1:22).

Speaking in tongues is a **sign**:

Therefore TONGUES are for a SIGN, not to them that believe but to them that believe not ... (I Corinthians 14:22).

In Jesus's day, those who sought after signs were called an evil and adulterous generation (Matthew 12:39). The eight miracles of the Gospel of John are properly called signs, which included the raising of Lazarus from the dead; and in the commission of Mark 16:15-18, water baptism is associated with signs. This is proved in the book of Acts because everywhere water baptism is mentioned a sign is

learned to glory in his weakness (II Corinthians), and to walk by the rule of the new creation, knowing that he was crucified with Christ, Who is now living in Him (Galatians), and who sees with Spirit-enlightened eyes the heavenly character and calling of the Church (Ephesians), and is becoming a follower of Paul in the race – running the course unto Christ – "the day of Christ" (Philippians), who is holding fast the Head, paying no attention to those who would delude him with persuasiveness of speech and make a spoil of him through "philosophy" and would judge us in "religious" things or rob us of our prize by turning us to a self-humility that fails to hold fast the Head (Colossians): such a believer is ready indeed for the blessed hope of our Lord Jesus Christ's return (I & II Thessalonians)!

(1918)

you'll not find God saying in this verse to avoid such liberties because they have the appearance of evil. The verse isn't saying that!

Your actions and life choices are either *evil* or they are not. If what you do is evil then *don't* do it! If it isn't then you have the freedom to do it or not, it is up to you – even if others think it "looks bad!" You may be misunderstood by the legalists but you'll be in good company – Jesus looked bad to the religious people of His day.

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled (Titus 1:15).

mentioned in the immediate context.

This present age is a *signless* age. We have been blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). This is where the emphasis lies for the Christian.

FACT #7

That the *commission* the Church, the Body of Christ, is to work under, is found in II Corinthians 5:14-21 and Ephesians 3:9.

The Kingdom *commission* of Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-18 does not belong to God's present grace purpose. The message of *reconciliation* has been committed to us, the Body of Christ.