



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume IX  
Issue 204

# *Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift*

## Part II

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).*

### SUFFERING WITH HIM

*... If so be that we suffer with Him ...  
(Romans 8:17).*

As heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ we are destined to share in His glory and reigning; but this comes about only through our suffering “with Him.” It is only after our suffering together with Christ that we will share in His glory and reigning.

*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:17).*

*If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him ...  
(II Timothy 2:12).*

Notice the phrase “suffer with Him” in Romans 8:17.

First of all, our sufferings are not solo – we do not suffer alone. As believers we do not walk our broken road unaccompanied. We “suffer with Him.” We are “suffering together” (CLV) with the Lord Jesus Christ. What consolation and comfort. What solace and encouragement. This understanding in



itself can change the whole face of suffering; our attitude and disposition. In our sufferings we can be changed from discouragement to encouragement; from sorrow to joy; from complaint to praise; from ungratefulness to thanksgiving and gratitude. After all, we are doing it together – “with Him.”

Secondly, the only suffering that meets the condition of reigning “with Him” (II Timothy 2:12), is suffering “with Him.” Wonderful truth indeed!

The simple fact is that all of mankind suffers. This is merely the lot of Adam’s descendants. What transforms any suffering into preparation for one to share in Christ’s glory and reigning is enduring it “with Him.” Doing so “with Him” in the spirit of patience and joy – not with complaining, murmuring and grumbling, but with gratefulness and thanksgiving – turns any trial, however common it may appear to be, into a timeless treasure. Read the broader context:

*... If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:17-18).*



## DO NOT WASTE YOUR SUFFERINGS!

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Corinthians 4:17).

Divine glory transcends all human suffering. In the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, trials are exceedingly valuable. Please, do not waste your sufferings! Don't be so foolish as to squander their worth. Rather, endure all of them "with Him," and in due process He will transform them into "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Faith takes hold of such a rich bounty, and transforms the sufferer! Little wonder Paul wrote,

... We glory in tribulations ... (Romans 5:3).

... In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us (Romans 8:37).

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

Never forget the divine leverage upon sufferings. Remember that our sufferings are not even worthy to be compared with the resulting glory that will be revealed in us – the glory that transcends!

... The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with **the glory which shall be revealed in us** (Romans 8:18).

Don't waste your sufferings by going through them *alone*. Rather, go through them "with Him." Recognize Him in every situation, and in so doing, the least to the greatest of your trials will be, in the divine due-process, gloriously transformed into "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

## Bible Student's Notebook™

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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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Allow the transforming power of Christ to rest upon your life. It will transform the spirit of frustration, fretting, worry, sadness and complaint into the spirit of satisfaction, contentment, faith, joy and thanksgiving.

*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (I Thessalonians 5:18).*

Imagine that! Giving thanks “*in every thing*,” having a grateful heart of gratitude in every situation, in every trial. This *is* “*the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!*” Why should it not be, when we see and understand God’s great transcendent plan for suffering?

Wait! There’s more. The divine life is beyond giving thanks “*in every thing*.” God’s work in our hearts and lives moves us on to be able to actually give thanks “*FOR all things*.” It is one thing to give thanks “*IN every thing*,” and quite another to give thanks “*FOR all things*.” Hear Paul’s words:

*Giving thanks always **for all things** unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20).*

Herein lies faith’s life of joy and peace.

## **MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

As “*ambassadors for Christ*” we are here “*in Christ’s stead*” (II Corinthians 5:20) – on *divine assignment*. As “*good soldiers of Jesus Christ*” we must “*endure hardness*” (II Timothy 2:3) – while here on our *tour of duty*.

This is not our homeland, as we are citizens of heaven.

*For our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20; KJV margin, Young’s).*

Earthly kingdoms are not our kingdoms; ours is heavenly.

*Who ... has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13).*

*... The Lord ... will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom ... (II Timothy 4:18).*

Earthly rulers are not ours; Christ is our King.

*... Our Lord Jesus Christ ... Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (I Timothy 6:14-15).*

Though in this world, we do not belong here; we are ministering abroad.

Any government that has official representation in a foreign land (*e.g.*, ambassadors or soldiers) is responsible for their well-being and care. Working on foreign soil is an honor and a privilege, but the fatherland is always responsible for whatever might be incurred in the performance of diplomatic or military service.

Soldiers, or GIs (*i.e.*, “government issue”) belong to the government that they represent. They are not their own: they are bought with a price. As a result, they are not responsible for their own provision and supplies, for what man goes to war at his own cost?

*Who goes to warfare any time at his own charges? (I Corinthians 9:7)*

Soldiers often find themselves overseas in *theaters of conflict* situated in hostile nations, their government being responsible for them while there. In fact, under such difficult circumstances they would qualify for HDP (*i.e.*, “Hardship Duty Pay,” or “Hazard Duty Pay”).

Ambassadors, as ministers of foreign affairs, will also often find themselves conducting their “foreign ministry” in dangerous situations on ►

unfriendly soil. This is all *par for the course* when one is living and conducting business away from one's own homeland, especially when that place of ministry is unsympathetic, antagonistic and intimidating, if not outright perilous – in a word, a society that is at enmity with the government one is representing.

If either a soldier or ambassador is “cut off” from the supply of his country, and must “covertly” operate as a supposed citizen of the country to which he ministers, he will of necessity need to provide for his own personal resources as well as those of his ministry. Yet surely his personal expenses will be completely repaid after his *tour of duty* is accomplished.

My son-in-law works for a company that requires him to travel a lot away from home – even abroad occasionally. He does not have a company account for all the expenses that he incurs in his work traveling on behalf of his company. He must pay for all of these expenses out of his own pocket; but then there is a day of reckoning; a day when he submits all of his personal expenses acquired while in their service. It is then that his company makes it all up to him.

The same is true of our Father.

*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name ...* (Hebrews 6:10).

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord* (I Corinthians 15:58).

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not* (Galatians 6:9).

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present*

*time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18).

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (II Corinthians 4:17).

*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (I Peter 1:7).

Little wonder that Paul makes use of these two analogies – soldiers and ambassadors.

*That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world* (Philippians 2:15).

## VENUES OF SUFFERING

Suffering has many aspects and dimensions. For the purpose of our study we will divide suffering into two basic categories: Common, and Special. There are the sufferings which are *common* to all mankind, and then there are those that are *special* and unique to us as believers.

We will look first at the *common* sufferings.

*For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now* (Romans 8:22).

The believer, because of the duty to which he has been called, must face the same types of suffering which all men must face. We must bear the pain, inconvenience and loss associated with life “*under the sun;*” for we, too, have been “*made subject to vanity*” (Romans 8:20). This comes with the territory,

*For every man shall bear his own burden*  
(Galatians 6:5).

We are not exempt from all the apparent vanities of this *dark-land*. We have our share of the *dark-side* – suffering, pain, discouragement, difficulties, weariness, pressure and the like – but these are not a waste. As we go through the various details of our earthly lives, we can make the most of them, offering up every aspect of our lives for His glory. We do so with even those areas of life that appear to be mundane and commonplace.

*Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31).

*And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men* (Colossians 3:17, 23).

All of the trials of life take on new meaning when done “*as unto the Lord,*” “*in the name of the Lord Jesus,*” “*to the glory of God.*” Every detail of life – down to the most basic elements – then becomes heavy with a “*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (II Corinthians 4:17).

With God having passage to live His Own extraordinary life through the *everyday* trials of our *ordinary* lives, there is produced for us *lasting value for all time*. This is divine life flowing through the most *basic necessities* of our lives – a vital part of the venues of His sufferings in us.

## BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

*Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31).

The believer, along with the rest of creation, must deal with trials associated with basic human needs

(i.e., food, shelter and clothing). We would not need to have the burdens connected with these needs were we in our homeland. We share in the experience of these necessities simply because we are here. We are here “*for His sake,*” and by faith we do so “*with Him.*”

Our Father teaches us essential lessons in the experience of these necessities. He adjusts our perspectives as to what is of real and lasting value, and teaches us divine contentment.

*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need* (Philippians 4:11-12).

The circumstances of life that revolve around our basic human needs take up much of our time and energy. They are the lot of our existence, and this is so by divine design. Yet we are able to redeem this time from the vanity of Adam’s descendants and have it transformed unto that which is of celestial value.

*And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men* (Colossians 3:17, 23).

## WORKING FOR PROVISIONS

*... Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that has need* (Ephesians 4:28).

Food, clothing and shelter, of necessity also bring into view our daily labors for provisions. Making a living is a vital part of our divine assignment.

Not only must food be grown or purchased, ►

it must be cleaned, prepared and preserved. Not only must clothing be bought, it must be washed and cared for. Not only must shelter be secured, it must be maintained. For the believer, the entire process is about our Father, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these details are about the maintaining of our lives here “*for His sake.*” We do this all “*for Him,*” so that we may have the privilege of being His “*vessels of mercy.*”

We serve our Lord – at least for the time being – at our own expense. We must provide our own sustenance so that we may live for Him. This is because we serve Him on hostile soil. We must do so “undercover” as it were. We are not recognized for the high and lofty positions that we hold in the celestial government. We are not acknowledged as the sons of God that we are. Our positions and functions are currently veiled. This is presently a covert operation to the world, but when the unveiling of our true identity takes place – “*the manifestation of the sons of God*” (Romans 8:19) – then the subjected vanity will be removed and we will be amply repaid – abundantly reimbursed.

Don’t allow the commonplace to be wasted. Don’t let their value and wealth conversion pass you by. Grasp the divine viewpoint! Be,

*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord* (Romans 12:11).

*And that you study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you* (I Thessalonians 4:11).

*And let ours also learn to maintain good works* [KJV margin reads: “*profess honest trades*”] *for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful* (Titus 3:14).

## **PAUL’S EXAMPLE OF LABOR**

*Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to*

*them that were with me* (Acts 20:34).

Work is so much more than a way of making money. It is the opportunity for God to live out His life in us. Labor is a part of His plan for us. Ultimately God is our employer, as we really work for Him.

Even Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13), labored, working with his own hands.

*And labor, working with our own hands ...* (I Corinthians 4:12).

Paul walked away from his “*dung*” religion. He counted it all a “*loss for Christ*” (Philippians 3:7). It was ecclesiastical waste. In the process he lost his “*professional ministry.*” Paul took up making tents for a living (Acts 18:1-3). He thereby taught us the divine value and purpose of work.

We, too, are “*tentmakers*” of sorts. That is, we work with our own hands to make a living. “*Tentmaking*” finds its own unique form in each of us. It matters little in the divine perspective of things what the particular details of our own “*tentmaking*” involves. The important thing is that we are “*tentmaking.*”

One occupation is no higher or more pleasing to God than another. All work has meaning when it is done for the Lord. The life of God in us makes all things we do sacred.

Although Paul made his living making tents, that is not what defined his life. He was not “*Paul, the tentmaker.*” No, he was defined by heaven in light of his divine calling and vocation: “*Paul, the apostle.*” He just made tents so he could do the work of an apostle.

As believers, we are to regard our “*secular*” work as divine – “*as unto the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24; Titus 2:9-10). Thus, each believer’s vocation is indeed a high calling of God (Ephesians 4:1). As William Carey (1761-1834)

would say, "My business is preaching the gospel, and I cobble shoes to pay my expenses."

Often the man who teaches God's Word is looked down upon, as if he were not genuine, if he is not *religiously* "salaried." It is amazing how the tables have turned. The fact is that Paul was not for "hire." Rather, he was the bond-slave of Jesus Christ, making his living as a humble laborer.

Witness Lee brings his own testimony:

Paul worked with his hands at making tents in order to support both himself and those who were with him. He worked in order to help his young co-workers. This indicates that Paul's way was not that of today's clergy who make a profession out of preaching – *Life-study of Acts*, p. 479.

Paul reminds us that we, too, have a heavenly vocation. He implores us to "*walk worthy of **the vocation***" wherewith we have been called. We must not confuse what we do to make a living with the purpose of our lives. Our occupation is just the context in which we carry out our divine calling. The circumstances of our earthly labors are but the backdrop of God's working in our lives. They are the stage of the Master Performer.

Every believer has been called into "full time" ministry in the context of personal daily life. We are all self-employed full-time servants. Every area and every aspect of life belongs to Him. No matter what the circumstances of life are around us, regardless of what earthly occupation we may use to supply our needs and those of others around us, we have a divine vocation to which we have been called.

We have the wonderful opportunity of living our lives for the Lord, serving Him in the context of "tent-making." More often than not, this context can have the appearance of a monotonous, daily routine; but the very life of God running its full course in our day-by-day circumstances will make

our lives anything but monotonous and routine.

*For yourselves know how you ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought [i.e., nothing, or, for free, without payment]; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample [i.e., example] unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread (II Thessalonians 3:7-12).*

## DIVINE VOCATION

*"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, **as unto Christ**; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but **as the servants of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, **as to the Lord, and not to men**: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free" (Ephesians 6:5-8).*

This is an amazing passage. In it Paul speaks to those who have the greatest disadvantage in their daily work – slaves. He covered the most extreme working conditions, so we would know that *ALL work*, no matter how difficult and trying, no matter how taxing and weary, can be done "*as to the Lord, and not to men*" – "*whether he is bond or free.*"

In fact, all we do is to be done "*as to the Lord, and not unto men*"

And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ... (Colossians 3:17, 23).

Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

Even the most severe of working conditions can be conducted consciously for our Father. Our labors ultimately are to be for Him.

Paul wanted us to know something about our labor; for in the context of daily work he writes,

**Knowing** that whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free (Ephesians 6:8).

And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to

the Lord, and not unto men; **Knowing** that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23-24).

Work which is done “as to the Lord” shall be rewarded. How can this not be, for with Him living and working through us, all our labors are “the work of the Lord.”

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58).

Our labors can be alive with the very life of God – they can be His livelihood in us.

All of life is about Him! Revel in it!

(to be continued)

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