



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume IX
Issue 206

Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift

Part IV

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).

ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GLORY

Those of us who must endure special sufferings related to our divinely appointed vocation have abundant opportunities for celestial glory. In this section we will catalog some of the areas of these enormous opportunities.



We may take additional suffering upon ourselves when we not only bear our own burdens (Galatians 6:5), but also those of our fellow comrades.

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves (Romans 15:1).

The Desire to Live Godly

Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12).

The Receiving of the Word of God

And you became followers of us, and the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction ... (I Thessalonians 1:6).

Compare this to what Jesus prayed concerning the Twelve Apostles:

I have given them Your Word: and the world has hated them ... (John 17:14).

The Bearing of Others' Burdens

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Heralding the Good News – Paul's "Evangel."

Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (II Timothy 1:8).

And I, brothers, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased (Galatians 5:11).

... My gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds (II Timothy 2:8-9).

But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God

(see **SUFFERING**, page 1987)



Dearly Beloved Family,

Our Funny Language

Language can be quite amusing at times. At least I know English can, and I am sure that other languages are as well.

I thought I would share some English "funnies" with you. These are the kind of things that get passed around through email. I have been collecting a few, and enjoyed them so much I thought I would share them with you. Lighten up and have a little fun.

1. The bandage was **wound** around the **wound**.
2. The farm was used to **produce produce**.
3. The dump was so full that it had to **refuse** more **refuse**.
4. We must **polish** the **Polish** furniture.
5. He could **lead** if he would get the **lead** out.
6. The soldier decided to **desert** his **dessert** in the **desert**.
7. Since there is no time like the **present**, he thought it was time to **present** the **present**.
8. A **bass** was painted on the head of the **bass** drum.
9. When shot at, the **dove dove** into the bushes.
10. I did not **object** to the **object**.
11. The insurance was **invalid** for the **invalid**.
12. How can I **intimate** this to my most **intimate** friend?
13. They were too **close** to the door to **close** it.
14. The buck **does** funny things when the **does** are present.
15. A seamstress and a **sewer** fell down into a **sewer** line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his **sow** to **sow**.
17. The **wind** was too strong to **wind** the sail.
18. After a **number** of injections my jaw got **number**.
19. Upon seeing the **tear** in the painting I shed a **tear**.
20. I **shed** a **tear** when I saw him **tear** my **shed**.
21. I had to **subject** the **subject** to a series of tests on various **subjects**.

There is no egg in eggplant.

There is no ham in hamburger.

There is no apple or pine in pineapple.

Guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

Boxing rings are square.

(see **EDITORIAL**, page 1991)

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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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SUFFERING (continued from page 1985)

to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention (I Thessalonians 2:2).

For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach (I Timothy 4:10).

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (II Timothy 2:10).

All of these areas are above and beyond that which is "common to man." We have great and abundant opportunities before us to step up our celestial investment.

... 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).

AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED AWHILE

... After that you have suffered awhile (I Peter 5:10).

In all of these areas of suffering that we have been investigating, here's the principle: first the cross, then the crown; first the suffering, then the glory. This is the standard of Christ:

... Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

... When it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (I Peter 1:11).

This is also the principle of all saints, regardless of the age in which they live.

But the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal [eonian] glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered awhile,

make you perfect, established, strengthened, and settled (I Peter 5:10).

Shall we shrink from this Christ-honoring ministry of suffering? Should we not see troubles and trials for what they really are, noble opportunities for heavenly progress?

Oh, that we would learn to yield unreservedly to the great wisdom of God's amazing appointment of suffering!

... For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto (I Thessalonians 3:3).

PRESENT BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

During our studies we haven't spoken of the future benefit of suffering. The believer's suffering also has current benefits. We will consider a few of them.

Sufferings Drive Us to Christ

When we have difficult trials, where else is there to turn, for He truly knows and understands. He is "*acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53:3) and "*... touched with the feelings of our infirmities*" (Hebrews 4:15). He entered our darkness so that He could touch us there, and then led us to His bountiful "*Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James 1:17).

If we did not trust in Him, how else could we bear our difficulties? Whose love comforts the careworn and binds up the broken hearted like our Savior, and His Father?

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ (II Corinthians 1:3-5).

Sufferings Enable Us to Demonstrate the Grace of God

Earthly sorrows produce in us God-like virtue (i.e., godliness), enabling us to show forth Christ to the world. Many times the world will listen to the voice of affliction after it has turned a deaf ear to impersonal sermons. How many unconcerned hearts have been touched by the sight of Christ-like endurance?

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God (II Corinthians 3:2-5).

Sufferings Enable Us to Have Compassion

We can have real compassion toward those to whom we minister only when we are able to identify with them. THIS IS REAL ministry!

Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (II Corinthians 1:4).

Sufferings Reveal to Us Our Weakness

There is nothing that will bring us “to ourselves” quite like suffering. Suffering truly has immense value in this regard. We will soon find, in the midst of personal problems, how weak we really are. We are brought to the place where God can use us when we are humbled. The principle always has been clear: without being made humble, no one will ever be exalted.

... Every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:14).

VESSELS OF CLAY

... Who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, “Why have you made me thus?” Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Romans 9:20-21).

Here we have the potter working the clay to make a vessel. The picture often formed in our mind is that of the wizened potter sitting at the spinning wheel, using his hands to fashion the shape of the clay into a form of his choosing. Indeed, this is a picture of our Father at work in us; but we often miss “the rest of the story”: the clay must be placed in an oven and subject to the extreme heat of an intense fire in order for the form to solidify, and become useable and useful to its master.

Ahh: this is the catch. We don't mind being fashioned by our Father, but it's the fire that completes, that perfects the process, the part which we do not want to experience in order to bring about His perfection in us. Truly the writer of Hebrews spoke the truth of the matter:

Now no chastening [discipline] for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous ... (12:11).

With this statement we heartily agree, and so when we encounter the trials, tribulations and sorrows of this life, we seek to escape such suffering in order to bring about the peace and contentment we so desperately crave. Yet, in so doing, we again miss “the rest of the story” provided in the second part of the verse:

... nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.

Notice the word “exercised” – a term, or an idea, which many shun because of the implication of the suffering involved in such exertion. Moreover, in so doing, we miss the tremendous gift which our Father has provided for us through this experience of suffering.

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy (I Peter 4:12-13).*

The principle of God's work in our lives is that suffering precedes glory. The fiery furnace must come before our predestined glory. The phrase "fiery trial" is but one Greek word, *purosos* (Strong's Greek Lexicon #4451), meaning "smelting."

Do you despair over what you are going through? Do not fret; the fiery kiln is as much a part of the purpose of God in you as is the potter's wheel. Because you are God's clay – His "workmanship" – He is responsible for who you are – even in every trial. He uses them, just as a potter does, in His own wisdom and at His own discretion.

Sometimes it seems easy when the Potter has "His hands on us" – when we are on His wheel. It is when we get "moved" from the wheel into the kiln that we "feel" so alone – in the midst of the fire; but even then He is the Potter.

We rejoice in the words of Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925):

God has created me for a definite purpose. That purpose I shall ultimately fulfill in His economy. It is a wise and good purpose, one with which I should be perfectly satisfied and contented if I only understood it all. Toward that end I am continually moving. All things tend to advance me in that one direction, and I shall surely arrive. I shall surely fulfill the purpose of my creation, and all I have to do is to leave myself in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter to be fashioned according to His will.

We also rejoice in the words of William Mealand (1873-1957):

He takes pleasure in His Own work. Its far-reaching issues are to constitute the delight of

God's will, and its excellency will be celestially apparent above all earthly showing ... Vessels of honor for and in the Potter's hand – made not only by Him, but for Him.

He is *always* the Potter, and we are *always* His clay – even in the furnace. This is "the rest of the story."

GOD WHO SPARES NOT HIS OWN SONS

There is a method that the Father uses with His sons. It can be seen in His dealings with THE Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ... (Romans 8:32).

The Father did not spare His Son.

He did not spare Him the normal processes of life. He did not spare Him the long, quiet, hidden life of preparation. He did not spare Him the process of growth.

And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40).

He did not spare Him the religious antagonism of being His Son; the shame, ridicule, misunderstanding and mockery. He did not spare His own Son the denial, betrayal, disloyalty and forsaking of his closest companions. By all of this the Father perfected His Son.

For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation ... (Hebrews 5:8-9).

So here is the principle: God does not spare His sons; He did not spare Joseph, He did not spare Job, He did not spare Daniel, He did not spare David.

Neither did He spare Paul. He was up front with him in this respect. Ananias told him “*how great things he must suffer*” (Acts 9:16).

God will not spare us either, for we, too, are His sons.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:19-23).

The world around us does not know our true identity. They do not know who we really are: the sons of God. This has been hidden from them. God does not spare us the normal details of life; yet we do not endure them alone, but with a loving Father – THE Father – and with the divine life of His Son living through us.

A WARNING CONCERNING “SUFFERING”

It is important that we realize that we are to *bear* problems, not *provoke* them. Surely, any of us could be in *unnecessary* trouble if we did not use great wisdom. Many who supposedly “suffer for Christ” are simply reaping the fruit of their foolishness. We are not to have a “let’s go get into trouble” attitude. The goal is not to *get into trouble*, but to *bear* it patiently when it does come.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without (Colossians 4:5).

If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18).

Sometimes our suffering also is a result of our own sin. If our lives dishonor God they will lead to the reaping of their own fruit.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7).

We cannot live reckless lives and expect our sufferings to be “for Christ.” We must remember that if troubles come to us as a direct result of our own unconcern or sin, we will not receive reward for bearing that suffering; it is, in itself, its own reward for our previous decisions and actions. This sowing and reaping must not be viewed as the *direct* hand of God upon us, but rather the result of the natural laws of “sowing and reaping.” If we sin, God doesn’t need to “catch up with us” and “get us;” our own sin will do that.

SUFFERING IS NOT PERMANENT

One thing we know for sure: rest from our sufferings is promised.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (II Thessalonians 1:7).

Let us, dear brethren, not murmur and complain about the conditions of our life, but rather learn in “*whatsoever state ... to be content*,” and even more, to “*... take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake*.”

The trial that you now go through will not last forever. Paul calls it a “*light affliction, which is but for a moment*” (II Corinthians 4:17). It is all so momentary. Never forget that. Paul continues by telling us that it “*works for us a far more exceeding and eternal [eonian] weight of glory*.”

There is an often-repeated phrase found in the

Bible, in which by way of application we can find great comfort: “it came to pass.” The trial that you now go through did not “come to stay” – no, indeed – “it came to pass.”

Our divinely allotted appointment of suffering is only for a while.

... After that you have suffered awhile (I Peter 5:10).

DUE SEASON

... For in due season we shall reap ... (Galatians 6:9).

“Due Season” – write or print it on a sheet of paper and hang it on the wall!

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

There is a season for everything! Even those who are not familiar with the Bible know this from the famous 1965 song by the Byrds, “Turn, Turn, Turn.” It was adapted from the Book of Ecclesiastes.

EDITORIAL (continued from page 1986)

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth?

If the plural of goose is geese, why isn't the plural of moose meese?

If the plural of mouse is mice, why isn't the plural of house hice?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

If corn oil is made from corn, and vegetable oil is made from vegetables, then what is baby oil made from?

Why do we ship by truck and send cargo by ship?

Why do our noses run and feet smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

Indeed there is a season for everything, and there is one for reaping as well. We will reap in due season!

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

Don't be weary. Don't faint. We will reap in due season.

Deer Season

In Pennsylvania the first day of deer season is a VERY BIG deal. It appears to be some kind of state “holiday,” for even the schools are closed. They count down the days in great anticipation. Yet there is coming a season that is far grander than deer season – divine reaping season – “due season.” Although you can't mark your calendar for it – it is on the *divine* calendar – “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Count on it!

“Due Season” – hang it on the wall! ■

How is it that your house can burn up as it burns down, you fill in a form by filling it out, and an alarm goes off by going on?

How is it that when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible?

Why doesn't “Buick” rhyme with “quick”?

Why do we drive on a *parkway*, and park on a *driveway*?

No wonder I had trouble in English class.

Until next week, my love to each of my siblings!

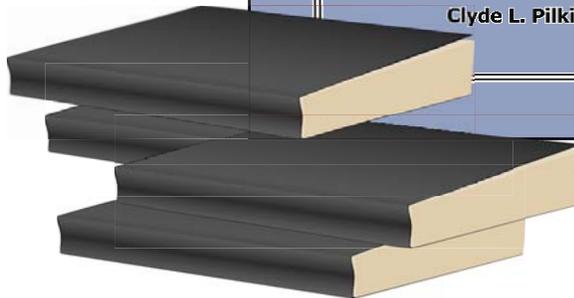
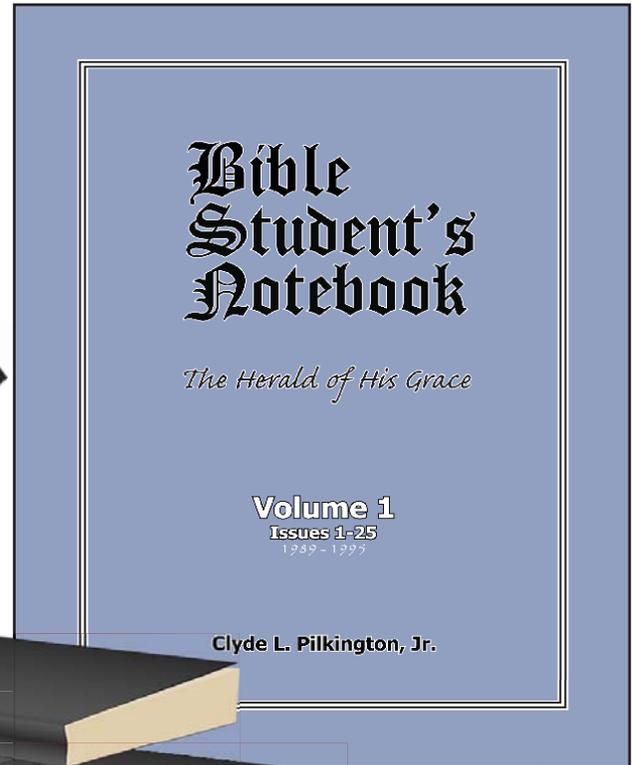
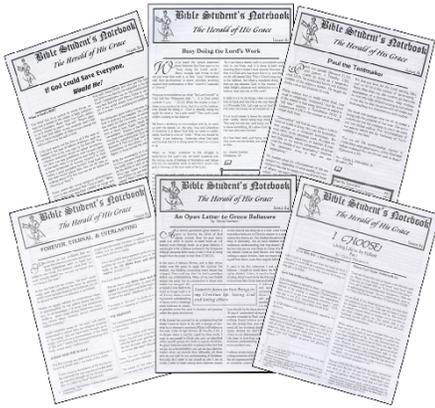


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