



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume X
Issue 234

Peace in the Middle of Life's Greatest Trials

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7).

Life is hard. It is hard by the design of God.



The knowledge that ALL is *out of God*, that ALL is *through God*, and that ALL is *into God* can settle the weary heart and bring peace to the troubled mind. Father is in control. Rest in that.

Living the divine-life is about trusting God's hand in all that we experience – in the "good" as well as in the "bad." It is about the full confidence of His Godhood and His abundant love for us.

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

The next principle from the Scriptures that will lead our hearts to peace is found in Genesis 50:20.

In this study we will be looking at a few foundational principles from the Scriptures that lead our hearts to peace in the middle of life's greatest trials.

God meant it unto good.

THE LAW OF CIRCULARITY

God's hand in our lives leaves no place untouched. Even that which seemingly is working against us is used by our Father to fulfill His Own good purpose in our lives.

First, there is *the law of circularity* from Romans 11:36:

Out of Him and through Him and into Him is all: to Him be the glory for the ages! Amen!

A powerful example of this is demonstrated in the life of Joseph. His brothers had sold him into slavery. In what would appear to many as a very sad and unfortunate turn of events, Joseph saw a divine appointment: "God meant it for good."

Here is the simple, glorious truth of this verse in a nutshell:

But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

All is out of God.

All is through God.

All is into God.

Do not be discouraged in our severest of trials. Trust God's steady, unfailing hand in all that we experience – in the "good" as well as in the "evil." The knowledge that "God meant it for good"

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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 (1 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 law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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)

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can settle the tired heart and bring peace to the worried mind.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Father has a plan, He is in control. Rest in that.

I CREATE EVIL

Then there is the principle found in Isaiah 45:7.

*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and **CREATE EVIL: I the Lord do ALL THESE THINGS.***

God does “*all these things*,” including the creation of “*evil*.” We must never forget that everything is about God. Nothing comes into our lives that is not from His hands. He has never lost control of any aspect of His universe. He is the “*All in all*” (I Corinthians 15:28).

We can see this all the way back in the Garden of Eden. Nothing there took Him by surprise. It all worked together for His purpose. God did NOT start playing “catch-up” with man’s rebellion. God *always* has been in the lead. After all, it was *God Himself* Who planted a garden with two trees; one tree of *Life* was His creation, and the other tree of *Good and Evil* was His creation too.

Note so very carefully that “*good*” and “*evil*” come from the EXACT SAME TREE! They *both* are of divine origin! Adam and Eve looked to the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, while missing the *Tree of Life*. If we focus on “*good*” or “*evil*” we, too, will miss “*life*.” Divine Life stands *apart* from good and evil. It is from an ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TREE!

God created “*evil*” as a part of His divine plan. It did not “sneak” into His creation; it wasn’t brought into His creation by some other means or creature. He put it there – right in the “*midst*” (Genesis 2:9). It is at the root of His plan of being “*All in all*.” As with Pharaoh, “*for this cause have I raised you up*.” It is truly all about Him!

The “*Christian Life*” has nothing to do with the human performance of “*good*” or “*evil*.” It is rather about the enjoyment of His “*Life*” living in us, in the “*midst*” of “*good and evil*.”

“*I the Lord do all these things*” can change the way we look at *all things*, for,

All things are of God (II Corinthians 5:18).

As with Joseph (“*God meant it for good*”), it is vital for us to understand that Father has His hands in everything that comes our way. He actively operates in and through every situation. As one reader, Frank Kujawa, writes,

Whatever is said to us, or done to us, is actually being done by God. We can grow with this information. Others (actually God) come into our lives in order to purify us, to make us stronger. This means that whoever is bugging us the most, is exactly the one we need at the time, and we are to thank God for it ... So, we see God in all things ... And we cannot judge, because in essence we are judging God. And who are we to do that?

We must embrace the fact that Father has a plan, and that He is in absolute control; after all, He *IS* God.

Rest in that.

SHALL WE NOT RECEIVE EVIL?

Our next principle is found in the life and experience of Job.

Then said his wife to him, “Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die.” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this did not Job sin with his lips (Job 2:9-10).

“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job ►

sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:21-22).

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ...
(Job 13:15).

God always knows best. Evil plays a key part in our spiritual development and maturity. Job learned to recognize that good as well as evil came from the very “*hand of God.*” So many, who profess to know God, do not acknowledge this important truth. For them, even to suggest that evil comes to them from the hand of God is sinful; yet Job declared it to be so with his own mouth, and God proclaimed of him,

After his many great trials, the only thing that Job really had left was his life, and even *it* seemed to be hanging only by a thread. Yet Job trusted God, even with his very life; and why wouldn't he? Job knew that everything he had was from the hand of God, even His life; “*the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*”

In ALL THIS Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

God had given Job his life, just as He had breathed into Adam's “*nostrils the breath of life*” (Genesis 2:7), and he knew that this breath would “*return unto God Who gave it*” (Ecclesiastes 12:7) one day, just as it had to each of his ancestors.

Faith recognizes that the rain is as important as the sunshine, that the tears are as needed as laughter, and that the dark colors are as valuable in the tapestry as are the light. Like a building under construction, a painting yet wet and unfinished, a batter unbaked, a tapestry still being woven, a tree that has yet to reach maturity, we with patience await the Master's grand completion.

Job trusted God even with his breath. It was the breath of God that filled his lungs. Even though he knew that, sooner or later, that breath would depart and return to God, he also knew that God would redeem him from the power of the grave. Job had the firm expectation of resurrection!

Job also learned that it is Father, in His great wisdom, Who “*gives*” and “*takes away.*” Through all of Job's trials he was able to “*bless the name of the Lord*” – even through the “*evil*” and the “*taking away.*”

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:25-27).

Paul echoes this spirit,

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

Job had trusted God in the face of every other enemy; and as with all of us, death would be his last. Job even trusted God in this enemy's face, but he knew that his Redeemer had the power over death.

“***IN*** everything give thanks” – truly amazing words – but even further than that, we are to be thankful not only “***IN*** everything,” but “***FOR*** all things.”

Well did Paul write,

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

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:26).

THOUGH HE SLAY ME

Again, in the life of Job, we find,

With such confidence of faith, even as we experience life's greatest of trials, “*the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:7).

BUT IF NOT

Another principle is in Daniel 3:16-18.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-18).

The "Three Hebrew Children," to put it lightly, were in a "tight spot." Their very lives were in the balance. The king held the power of their lives in his hands, or so he thought.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that things are not always as they appeared to be, and that what they saw with their eyes was not the real picture of the situation.

Despite the fact that King Nebuchadnezzar was an earthly monarch who *appeared* to have their destiny under his control, they knew that there was a heavenly Sovereign Who had all things under His control. They knew the truth, as we learn later in the book of Daniel, that,

... the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will ... (Daniel 4:17, 25).

... all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will ... among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand ... (Daniel 4:35).

This is the great truth of God's sovereignty over the affairs of men taught throughout the Scriptures.

... Are not You God in heaven? and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that none are able to withstand You? (II Chronicles 20:6).

Likewise,

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He will (Proverbs 21:1).

For in fact,

... HE is a great King over all the earth (Psalms 47:2).

It is these truths that gave the "Three Hebrew Children" their strength and courage. They knew that *GOD WAS ABLE* to deliver them! Listen again to their response.

*... **Our God ... is able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace ...*

It can bring great peace to any trial or situation that we face, to know in our hearts that "... *Our God ... is able to deliver us.*" Faith calls us to live daily in these words: "*God ... is able!*"

Yet faith is greater than all of this! Faith calls us to live beyond "*God ... is able!*" Listen to the rest of their response.

***"But if not,** be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."*

Here is our theme for today: "**But if not.**" Just as with the "Three Hebrew Children," God is able to deliver us from our trials and troubles, however great they are; but if He does not, He is still our God, He is still in control, and He is still working "*all things after the counsel of His Own will!*" (Ephesians 1:11). Faith calls us to far greater heights, to live daily in these words: "*But if not!*"

We cannot always understand the great trials of life; we cannot always understand what is truly best for us and our loved ones; we cannot always see the "big picture" for what it really is – from its eternal and heavenly perspective – but Father can!

Father is able to deliver you from your current situation that at this moment may seem so hopeless;

"but if not," nothing has changed: He is still **THE** great God, and sometimes in His great love and wisdom He has destined for you not deliverance, but endurance – and that by His unfailing grace.

"God is able" to deliver us, and He may do just that – "but if not ...". Regardless of the situations that we face, Father is in control. Rest in that.

NEVERTHELESS

The next principle that we will look at is in Luke 22:42.

*Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: **NEVERTHELESS** not My will, but Yours be done (Luke 22:42).*

Often, we do not know what is really best. What seems to us a great heartache and devastating loss, God has determined, in His love and wisdom, to be to our advantage.

As our Lord Jesus Christ faced the agonizing prospects of Calvary, it caused Him tremendous trepidation. His entire being recoiled at the thoughts of what He was about to face and experience. It produced deep agony in His heart and soul.

*And being in an **AGONY** He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).*

His prayer to Father was for deliverance, that the cup of Calvary would pass from Him; but this would not be Father's will. Father had a grander plan that included a journey up Golgotha's shameful hill – and Father always knows best.

All of us who know the rest of the story are eternally thankful that God did not allow this cup to pass from our Lord. Indeed, this cup was at the center of Father's purpose for the ages. We are thankful that our Lord Jesus Christ did not resist Father's will, but rather learned obedience to His all-knowing, all-wise and all-loving destiny.

*Though He were a Son, yet learned He **OBEEDIENCE** by the things which He **SUFFERED***

(Hebrews 5:8).

*... He **HUMBLED** Himself, and became **OBEIDENT** unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).*

We, too, as sons of God, are being fashioned into the image of Christ, for this is our divine destiny (Romans 8:29; I Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2); and we, like Christ, must learn obedience through suffering. This is Father's path to glory, for Christ as well as us.

Christ's Path to Glory Was Through Suffering:

*Ought not Christ to have **SUFFERED** these things, and to enter into His **GLORY**? (Luke 24:26).*

*But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the **SUFFERING** of death, crowned with **GLORY** and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).*

*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).*

*[The prophets] Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the **SUFFERINGS** of Christ, and the **GLORY** that should follow (I Peter 1:11).*

Our Path to Glory Is Also Through Suffering:

*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).*

*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 4:13).*

*But the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His age-lasting **GLORY** by Christ Jesus, after that you have **SUFFERED** a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you (I Peter 5:10).*

Like our Lord Jesus Christ, we may look at the situations and circumstances that are before us and pray that Father would let them pass. This is not a wrong request, as our Lord prayed it as well. Paul tells us,

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God (Philippians 4:6).

As per the instructions of Paul, and the example of Christ, we should pour our hearts out to Father when they are heavy. We should tell Him what it is that we want, but we must also, with our Lord, submit our troubles and trials, as well as OURSELVES, to His wise and loving will: “*NEVERTHELESS not my will, but Yours be done.*”

Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; 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).

Christ submitted Himself to the wise and loving will of His Father. Father’s answer to us at times may be deliverance. More often than not, however, as in the case of our Savior, when we approach His GRACIOUS throne, what we find is His “*grace to help in time of need.*”

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

When we pray for the cup of our heavy burdens and trials to pass, may we also have the courage of faith to pray “*NEVERTHELESS not my will, but Yours be done.*” While deliverance may be in our hearts, may our hearts obediently submit to His wise and loving will; and with Christ we can – *for the joy set before us – endure our trials.*

The knowledge of FATHER’S wise and loving will can settle the weary heart and bring peace to the troubled mind. Regardless of the situations that we face, Father knows best. Rest in that.

ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD

Another principle is in II Corinthians 5:18. In this verse Paul makes this amazing statement:

And all things are of God

It is sad that many professing believers seem to believe in a “God” who is somehow less than “God.” Our Father, the God of Scripture, is the absolute Sovereign of the universe. How could it be otherwise and He remain “God”? Any concept that is less than this is weighed in the balances and found lacking!

In 1885 Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925) wrote concerning Paul’s powerful statement that “*all things are of God*”:

There is no statement in the Bible, that was made by an apostle, that is more remarkable and even startling than this statement. When you think of it seriously, it seems as though Paul was very unguarded and careless in his language. We are apt to think that he ought to have modified and limited it in some way, such as, for instance, all good things are of God.

But no, Paul makes the sweeping, unqualified statement, “*All things are of [i.e., out of] God.*” Furthermore, so important did Paul consider this truth that he repeats it over and over again.

The direct statement is made no less than six times in the writings of the apostle:

For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things ... (Romans 11:36).

... There is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things ... (I Corinthians 8:6).

... All things [are] of God (I Corinthians

11:12).

All things are of God ... (II Corinthians 5:18).

... The purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His Own will (Ephesians 1:11).

... for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things ... (Hebrews 2:10).

Now, was the apostle careless and a little too bold in these utterances, or did he mean just what he said, and are they true, taken full strength? I say, without any hesitation, yes, to the two latter questions. The more we learn (the more revelation) of God's works and ways, the more we shall understand that in a sense absolutely "all things are of God."

The knowledge that "all things are of God" can settle the weary heart and bring peace to the troubled mind. Regardless of the situations that we face, all things are out of God. Father is in control. Rest in that.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER

Romans 8:28 is another principle.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Regardless of what those who profess to speak for God may say, God has not been haphazardly working His way through the stages of time. He has been closely following His definite plan for the ages.

God has planned His work, and He has been working His plan – all to fulfill His Own predetermined purpose. His plan is, always has been, and always will be right on schedule – in all of its fullness.

Father's hand leaves *no* place untouched in your life. Even that which seemingly is working against you is *used* by your Father to fulfill His Own good

purpose in your life. This truth can be seen in the life of our Apostle.

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. The circumstances of his life had the appearance of working negatively – extremely negatively. Yet, he wrote with such confidence that the opposite was actually true:

But I would that you should understand, brothers, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12).

The fact is simple: you *can* trust God. He alone is truly trustworthy, and He has a definite goal in view for you! Your Father is taking you on a journey that has as its final goal conformity unto Christ. For in the very next verse Paul says,

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).

To be conformed to the image of His Son is your predestination. To take you on this journey will mean many years of wilderness and valleys. His current goal is to bring you to a place where you find your completeness, satisfaction, contentment, glory, thanksgiving and rejoicing in Him alone, and not in your circumstances.

God is actively at work in us, even in the circumstances of life that we may dread most. Do not be discouraged. Do not fret. Trust Him there. Rest fully and confidently in His work. The God Who works "all things after the counsel of His Own will" finds no challenge with the circumstances and details of life – not even the hard ones. Nothing poses an obstacle to Him – after all, He is the ALMIGHTY God.

Therefore, there is nothing that comes our way that God does not take and make an instrument of His work in our lives. Regardless of what comes our way our Father can *work* them together for good. After all, He is the Master Workman, and we are His *Master-piece*.

Listen to the *Concordant Version's* wonderful translation of Romans 8:28.

*Now we are aware that **God is working** all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose.*

Paul said, "Now we are aware ..." Are you aware? Regardless of the situations that we face, Father is in control. Rest in that.

THE POTTER HAS POWER!

Another foundational principle from God's Word that will guide our hearts to peace, even as we experience life's great trials, can be found in Romans 9:21.

Has not the potter power over the clay ...?

In the Scriptures Father is spoken of as a Potter; an analogy that places great emphasis upon His ever-present hand, and His well-designed plan in our lives.

The Potter always has complete power over His clay. He designs and makes His clay-creation according to His Own masterful plan. He is active in His craftsmanship, with His hands-on skill.

Isaiah the Prophet also confirmed this important principle:

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our Potter; and we all are the work of Your hand (Isaiah 64:8).

Paul validates this universal principle of Father as the Potter, and we as His clay.

Who are you who replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who 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).

Down to the Potter's House

In Jeremiah 18:1-6 God called Jeremiah "down to the Potter's house." It is critically important for the believer to "go down to the Potter's house." It is only here that we will ever gain the true reality of the divine perspective. When Jeremiah went down to the Potter's house, there he saw the Potter fashioning "a work on the wheels."

The Potter Is in Control

Of course Jeremiah could clearly see the clay for what it was – just passive material, and that it was the Potter, and the Potter ALONE, Who was steady at His important work.

It was the Potter Who "wrought a work on the wheels." A visit to the Potter's house reveals that it is *all* about the Potter. The clay, after all, was just soil from the earth – completely powerless over its own design and destiny.

... Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His Own will (Ephesians 1:11).

The Potter Is Responsible

Whatever is made of the clay on the Potter's wheel is *totally* the responsibility of the Potter. Clay does not have the power to make itself into anything. Nor does it have the power to resist the Potter's purposes.

Marred Vessels

And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter ...

Jeremiah saw that the vessel was "marred" – but do not miss this! It was "marred in the hand of the potter ..."

Of course it was! The clay can't mar itself! If the clay vessel is "marred," it is the Potter's responsibility.

A trip to the Potter's house will reveal the hand of the Potter in everything – even in *all* of life's brokenness. After all, He is the One Who mars

the vessel; it is *His* doing. Clearly and simply, any vessel is what it is *because of the Potter*.

Marred, but Still in the Potter's Hand

We are in the hand of the Potter. He is making us. Regardless of the stage of the clay's formation on the wheel, it is always in the Potter's controlling hand. Furthermore, not only is the clay on the wheel in the Potter's power, the clay is also always close to the Potter – for His hands are all over the clay. This speaks of the closeness of the Potter and His clay.

What peace have we who truly consider these words. It matters not what our lot in life may be; what our circumstances may be like – each of His vessels rests ever secure in His able hands.

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being ... (Acts 17:28).

This is the central truth that will allow us to,

Be careful for nothing ... (Philippians 4:6).

William Mealand (1873-1957) wrote of this wonderful truth.

How great a thing it is to realize ourselves as in His Hand! What equipoise and calm! For then, should wayward circumstance, or mood's despair come near, it is to find us still within that hand. As our "*faithful Creator,*" His Word is confirmed to our hearts in all its fine gradations: "*I have made, and I will bear. Even I will carry, and will deliver you.*"¹

He Made It Again – Another Vessel

He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it ...

Jeremiah also saw a process. He saw the Potter making the clay over again into another vessel. If the clay is "*made again another vessel,*" that too is equally and entirely the Potter's responsibility. The Potter is always responsible for whatever He makes.

1. *In the Hand of the Potter*, in the *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*.

The Potter is faithful to continue His work until He has made the clay into the vessel of His own desire and plan. This is simply the Potter's way: the clay is marred and then made new. We see it in the entire story of creation, for, there is coming a day when there will be a "*new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness*" (II Peter 3:13).

The Spinning of the Potter's Wheel

Be honest. Do you not often feel that your life is spinning out of control? Does it not seem to you to be quite a mess, that it is simply marred (ruined), veering wildly on a purposeless course?

This is nothing more than the spinning of the Potter's wheel beneath you.

The Pressure of the Potter's Hands

Do the pressures of life bear down hard upon you? Does the pressure feel too much at times; more than you can bear?

Paul, our Apostle, felt these pressures hard. They seemed unbearable and life-ending. Listen to his heartfelt expression, that he was

... Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (II Corinthians 1:8).

Know this truth: these are not the mere pressures of "circumstances" that you feel – this is the hand of the Potter pressing ever so firmly on the surface of your clay. Do you think that this pressure is hindering the work of the Potter in your life? No, indeed, *IT IS* the work of the Potter!

Beloved of the Potter, do not be discouraged with His loving work of wisdom. Trust Him implicitly. Patiently wait upon Him as He does His life-long work on you. After all, you are His workmanship, and He alone is responsible.

Do not be disappointed with His work, His methods and His timing. Simply trust Him unreservedly. He is absolutely skillful and faithful and He will accomplish His work (you) to supreme perfection!

“On Thy Potter’s Wheel”

Remember, Lord, Thou hast not made me good.
Or if Thou didst, it was so long ago
I have forgotten – and never understood,
I humbly think. At best it was a crude,
A rough-hewn goodness, that did need this woe,
This sin, these harms of all kinds fierce and rude.
To shape it out, making it live and grow.

But Thou art making me, I thank Thee, Sire.
What Thou hast done and doest Thou know’st well,
And I will help Thee: gently in the fire
I will lie burning; on Thy potter’s wheel
I will whirl patient, though my brain should reel.
Thy grace shall be enough the grief to quell,
And growing strength perfect through weakness dire.

George MacDonald (1824- 1905)
Diary of an Old Soul (1880)

Do not fret. His work is larger and grander than we
can see from the vantage of the spinning wheel.
You *are* who you *are* because God has made you
that way. You are *ever* changing – marred and
remade, because He is the Potter, and you are His
clay. The Potter is steadily and devotedly working
His clay. He is working, making you the vessel of
His own choosing.

... *Shall the thing formed say to him who
formed it, “Why have you made me thus?”*
(Romans 9:20).

Because you are God’s clay – His “*workmanship*”
– *He* is responsible for who you are at every stage
of the process. God will use His turning wheel
and the firm pressure of His hands at His Own
discretion.

The Potter has power – He has power **OVER** the
clay. Father is *always* the Potter, and we are *always*
His clay.

Regardless of the situations that we face, Father is
in control. Rest in that.

WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP

Then there is the principle found in Ephesians
2:10.

For we are His workmanship ...

Sometimes the Christian life is filled with
frustration, discouragement and guilt. These are
all rooted in self-reliance, and are a failure to lay
hold on the reality of God’s workmanship in our
lives.

The *Concordant Version* renders this phrase in
Ephesians 2:10 as,

For His achievement are we ...

We are *His* achievement! Think of it. God is busy
achieving something in you, regardless of how
you see things, or feel about it – God is at work
in you!

*Now unto Him Who is able to do exceeding
abundantly above all that we ask or think,
according to the power that **works in us***
(Ephesians 3:20).

*For it is God Who **works in you** both to will
and to do of His good pleasure* (Philippians
2:13).

*From Whom the whole body fitly joined
together and compacted by that which every
joint supplies, according to **the effectual
working** in the measure of every part,
makes increase of the body unto the edifying
of itself in love* (Ephesians 4:16).

William R. Newell well articulated the basis of the
distresses of the Christian life:

To “hope to be better” is to fail to see yourself
in Christ only.

To be disappointed with yourself, is to have
believed in yourself.

To be discouraged is unbelief – as to God’s
purpose and plan of blessing for you.

The fact is simple: we are not self-made; rather, we are God-made – *we are His workmanship, His achievement.* The great, wise and almighty God of the universe is steadily at work in your life. You are His handiwork.

Things are not as they appear. This divine work in our lives will culminate in “EVERY MAN” having the praise of God. This means that one day God will praise you. How could it be otherwise, for after all, YOU ARE His workmanship!

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes ... and then shall every man have praise of God (I Corinthians 4:5).

If it is true that God has made you and that you have not made yourself, if it is true that He began the work in you and will complete it, then why do you fret so? Why are you so anxious and troubled? Why are you so full of care, frustration and discouragement? After all, is He not God? Is He not in charge? Is not He the Creator, and you are His creature?

Regardless of the situations that we face, Father is in control – you are His workmanship – you are His achievement. Rest in that.

HE WILL FINISH WHAT HE STARTED

The final principle that we will look at is from Philippians 1:6.

Being confident of this very thing, that He Who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

You are the workmanship, the achievement of God. This is something that Paul was *confident* about – “*Being confident of this very thing.*”

Father “*has begun a good work in you*” and what He has started, He will finish to completion. With Paul, we can have the full *confidence* that He “*WILL perform it until the day of Jesus Christ!*”

This confidence that Paul speaks of here in Philippians 1:6 was not as sure when he wrote,

... For to will is present with me; but how to PERFORM that which is good I find not (Romans 7:18).

Paul could not find how to “*perform*” that which was “*good.*” Yet eventually he came to have confidence that Father would “*perform*” the “*good work*” that HE had started in him. What we can never “*perform*” in and of ourselves, God Himself “*will perform.*”

You are His work. He started you, and He *will* complete you. This is something about which you can be confident, because it is ALL of God. This is a divine process that He *Himself* will carry out to its completion.

Delighting in these great, glorious truths can settle the weary heart and bring peace to the troubled mind. Regardless of what appears to be happening in our lives, Father is in control, performing His work. *Rest in that.*



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