



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume X
Issue 242

Our Divine Vocation

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Servants, be obedient to them who 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.”



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).*

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

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 of our labors are “the work of the Lord.”

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).

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).

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

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

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

All of life is about Him! Revel in it!

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,

| | |
|--|------|
| Our Divine Vocation | 2277 |
| Divine Patience: in a World of Impatience... | 2279 |
| A Three-Fold Division | 2282 |
| Helpers of Your Joy | 2283 |
| Disoriented and Subverted | 2284 |

Bible Student's Notebook™

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 (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)

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; 1 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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Divine Patience: in a World of Impatience

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19).

... even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption ... (Romans 8:23).

... then do we with patience wait for it (Romans 8:25).

Man is impatient, and we live in a society that clearly magnifies this impatience. As the saying goes, we want everything “yesterday.” Ours is an age that seeks *instant* fulfillment and gratification of its wants and desires.

Think about our instant coffee, potatoes and oatmeal. We design and invent things to alleviate the “wait.” Yes, we are in the “micro” age with its two-minute popcorn and ten-minute cakes. We are also in a “computer” age with the fast processing of information. Yet that is still too slow for us, so everything gets faster and faster. Computers of this year’s design will soon be too slow.

Everything is “rush, rush, rush,” “hurry,” “quick,” “faster,” and we hear a lot of refrains like, “Isn’t it ready yet?” We seemingly have an ever-abundant supply of “fast food restaurants” and “convenience stores,” all to alleviate the “wait.” Even our posted speed limits are never quite fast enough. If the speed limit is raised on certain roadways, invariably the traffic will still be prone to exceed that limit; it is never really fast enough.

We need to ZIP our mail with a code. Come to think of it, better add four more digits to speed it a little faster – yeah, and a bar code would help too. “Faster, faster!” “Express,” “Overnight Delivery,” “Next Day Air,” “ASAP” and “PDQ.”

To see our impatience illustrated, all we need to do is to observe our favorite store’s check-out line. Here we can view a sampling of our hustled

impatience: people eyeing, almost frantically at times, the lanes around them for a shorter one. “Oh, no!” There is a price check, or the lady has to get check approval. We hear the huffs and sighs of intolerance. If you are there long enough you are likely to witness intended purchases left in carts in disgust. Our stores that are “in tune” with our nature proudly offer lines with “no waiting.” If there are customers in line, it is their policy to open another register. One chain of stores has a slogan that captures the nature of man: “Because America Can’t Wait.”

Our modern age is possibly more conscious of time than any generation before us. Arthur Custance, in his book *Journey Out of Time*, makes these insightful observations:

The more deeply embedded we become in the world of things, the more profoundly conscious we tend to become of time. One cannot have a pervasive concern with the three dimensions of space without being equally locked into the fourth dimension of time. It is not an accident that Western man has expanded so much energy perfecting clocks that parcel out time in smaller and smaller fragments upon which he places a more and more precise economic value. We have thus come to quantify almost the whole of life. Never in human history was man as conscious of the importance of material possessions and of the necessity of preserving physical life, while paying less and less attention to its spiritual values. And never in human ►

history was man so concerned to keep a precise record of the passing of time.

There is a real bond between things and time, because things occupy space, and space and time are inextricably bound together. And those whose philosophy is materialistic are accordingly far more time conscience.

People who are absorbed in the material world are absorbed in a temporal world: those who hold THINGS lightly hold TIME lightly. Those who are unwilling to share their things find it difficult to share their time. Time is money: which is another way of saying time is things.

To own a watch is fine as a prestige symbol, but to be in bondage to it is a form of slavery no sensible man should allow. The idea of an alarm clock that wakes a man while his soul is still wandering abroad in his dreams is the height of folly.

Even in "Christian Teaching" we see the ideas of impatience being taught and promoted under the mistaken understanding of the biblical phrase "redeeming the time." It is important for the believer to understand that the redemption of time has nothing to do with an attempt to get **more hours into a day**. "Redeeming the time" does not mean that we must move faster. It has to do with the transference of earth's time-value into celestial-value by utilization of the Divine viewpoint, thus we redeem its worth for the ages to come!

Patience Is a Part of God's Character

Patience is waiting during difficulty, inconvenience, trial and suffering. As we survey Paul's teachings on patience, we find that patience is a part of God's character.

... the God of patience ... (Romans 15:5, King James Version).

... the God of endurance ... (Romans 15:5, Concordant Literal Translation).

Just think: it was 4,000 years after Adam's disobedience that God sent the Redeemer for his race. God is not, and never has been in a hurry.

Patience is produced by the power of God in the life of the believer.

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (Colossians 1:11, KJV).

Being endued with all power, in accord with the might of His glory, for all endurance and patience with joy (Colossians 1:11, CLT).

God uses tribulation to produce His patience in the life of the believer.

Knowing that tribulation works patience (Romans 5:3).

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience (James 1:3).

Trials and infirmities are the framework in which patience is transferred into practice. This is why Paul gloried in it.

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

Impatience is a mark of immaturity. When a family takes a trip immaturity invariably questions, "Are we there yet?" Immaturity can't wait.

The infant, upon the first moment of "hunger pains," begins to squirm and make cries of protest. Their immaturity cannot wait. Adults, on the other hand, can endure the "gnawing" of the stomach, awaiting the appointed "dinner" time.

Miles Stanford, in his book *Principles of Spiritual Growth*, brings to our attention that "time" is one of the foremost principles of growth.

It seems that most believers have difficulty in realizing and facing up to the inexorable fact

that God does not hurry in His development of our Christian life ... So many feel they are not making progress unless they are swift and constantly forging ahead.

Now it is true that the new convert often begins and continues for some time at a fast rate. But this will not continue if there is to be healthy growth and ultimate maturity. God Himself will modify the pace. This is important to see, since in most instances when seeming declension begins to set in, it is not, as many think, a matter of "backsliding."

John Darby makes it plain that "it is God's way to set people aside after their first start, that self-confidence may die down. Thus Moses was forty years. On his first start he had to run away. Paul was three years also, after his first testimony. We must get to know ourselves and that we have no strength. Thus we must learn, and then leaning on the Lord we can with more maturity [which can only come with time], and more experientially, deal with souls."

Since the Christian life matures and becomes fruitful by the principle of growth much time is involved. Unless we see and acquiesce [submit] to this, there is bound to be a constant frustration, to say nothing of resistance to our Father's development process for us.

Dr. A.H. Strong illustrates ... "When God wants to make an oak, He takes an hundred years, but when He wants to make a squash, He takes six months ... growth is not a uniform thing in the tree or in the Christian. In some single months, there is more growth than in all the year besides. During the rest of the year, however, there is solidification, without which the green timber would be useless. The period of rapid growth, when woody fiber is actually deposited between the bark and the trunk, occupies but four to six weeks in May, June, and July."

Let's settle it once and for all – there are no shortcuts to reality! A meteor is on a shortcut as it proceeds to burn out, but not a star, with its steady light so often depended upon by navigators. Unless the time factor is acknowledged

from the heart, there is always danger of turning to the false enticement of shortcuts via the means of "experiences" and "blessings," where one becomes pathetically enslaved in the vortex of ever changing "feelings," adrift from the mooring of scriptural facts.

In regard to this subject George Goodman writes, "To taste of the grace of God is one thing, to be established in it and manifest it in character, habit and regular life, is another ... Fruit ripens slowly; days of sunshine and days of storm each add their share. Blessing will succeed blessing, and storm follow storm before the fruit is full grown or comes to maturity."

In that the Husbandman's method for true spiritual growth involves pain as well as joy, suffering as well as happiness, failure as well as success, inactivity as well as service, death as well as life, the temptation to shortcut is especially strong unless we see the value of and submit to the necessity of the time element; in simple trust resting in His hands, "*being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 1:6). And, dear friends, it will take a long time! But since God is working [for the ages], why should we be concerned about the time involved?

Graham Scroggie affirmed that "spiritual renewal is a gradual process. All growth is progressive, and the finer the organism, the longer the process ...

"And it is from day to day. How varied these are! There are great days, days of decisive battles, days of crisis in spiritual history, days of triumph in Christian service ... But there are also idle days, days apparently useless, when even prayer and holy service seem a burden. Are we, in any sense, renewed in these days? Yes, for any experience which makes us more aware of our need for God must contribute to spiritual progress ..."

But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Romans 8:25).

A Three-Fold Division

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

An important aspect of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” has to do with knowing where one fits into God’s timetable of events. God’s dealings with man have undergone various designed changes throughout history. Identifying and understanding these changes is basic to “rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

Timothy was at Ephesus, and Paul had written earlier to the Ephesians to give them a panoramic view of God’s dealings with mankind through the ages. He did this by making a clear, distinct and easily identifiable threefold division. A divine timetable can be found in Ephesians 2:7-13:

Past: “time past” (:11)

Present: “but now” (:13)

Future: “ages to come” (:7)

In providing the Ephesians with this overview, Paul was demonstrating to them the importance of knowing where they were in God’s plan for the ages.

Time Past

Paul tells us that during “time past” an unmistakable distinction was made between the *Circumcision* and the *Uncircumcision*, between Israel and the Gentiles.

Wherefore remember that you, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (:11-12).

Paul gives us certain identifiers for the period he refers to as “time past.”

- (1) *Circumcision* and *Uncircumcision* identified a basic physical, racial and social distinction made by God – one that was “in the flesh” and “made with hands.”
- (2) Gentiles were spiritually alienated from God and thus said to be “without Christ.”
- (3) This was their condition because they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.”

Whenever you find these distinctions governing the way God was working with men, you know immediately you are in “time past.” The books of Genesis through the Book of Acts are taken up with God’s “time past” dealings with man.

But Now

The “but now” period changed all that had been true in “time past.” No longer are Gentiles considered “far off.” This distinction has been eliminated and now “those who were far off are made nigh.”

But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us (:13-14).

During the “but now” period there has been a change in the way God deals with the nations, because “the middle wall of partition” that stood between them and Israel has been “broken down.” In the “but now” time they are dealt with on an equal basis and in the same manner: “there is no difference.”

Paul was the instrument our ascended Lord used to initiate the program of grace for the Gentiles by way of a message called “the mystery” – a secret purpose which God kept “hidden” in Himself until He revealed it to, and then through Paul the apostle.

Our Lord set aside the nation of Israel during the period covered by the book of Acts, and from heaven's glory introduced a *new* program through a *new* apostle. With the revelation of this new program we move into the "but now" period. *Romans through Philemon* are the books that *fit* into and define the "but now" division. These are the books that detail what God is doing during the present age of the dispensation of grace.

The Ages to Come

After the present age of the dispensation of grace is brought to a close, there is still much that God will accomplish. Since His *prophetic* program for the nation Israel has currently been interrupted, so that He could form the Body of Christ, His next order of business will be its resumption and completion.

Appropriately, the grouping of books following the Pauline epistles are the *Circumcision Epistles* (Hebrews through Revelation). They fit doctrinally into the "ages to come." The distinction between the *Circumcision* and the *Uncircumcision* returns in the *Circumcision Epistles*, and we find such statements as:

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **Twelve Tribes** which are scattered abroad, greeting* (James 1:1).

*But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*** (I Peter 2:9; c.f. Exodus 19:5-6).

RIGHT DIVISION: THE ANSWER TO UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

The Word of God itself provides us with the key to its own proper understanding through "*rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*" God's *ecclesia*, the Body of Christ, is not the only people in the programs and purposes of God. People in other ages need Scripture to instruct them in the specifics of God's dealings with them just as we do. Remember that all the Scripture is *for* us – but it is not all *to* us, nor is it all *about* us. If we fail to recognize this important fact, we will never be able to properly understand just what God is doing today, nor will we know just what He would have us do.

Helpers of Your Joy

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand (II Corinthians 1:24).

Paul, the apostle to the nations, was a *joy helper*. He spent his life assisting others in *their* joy. Such an undertaking is *divine*. We also have the privilege of joining this Pauline ministry in our daily lives. We can learn from Paul in this passage what it is that will bring real joy from God in others' lives.

No Human Dominion

Paul starts by saying, "*Not for that we have dominion over your faith.*" The beginning of divine joy is found in freedom from domination in the arena of faith. We are the helpers of others' joy by assisting them in their freedom from religious domination, for it is religious dominance that produces spiritual kill-joys. We can help set others free.

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).

Standing by Faith

Paul ends this verse with, "*for by faith you stand.*" The cycle of joy begins with freedom from religion, and finds its completion by standing in personal faith. We finish the cycle of being the helpers of others' joy by supporting them in their own personal faith before God.

To be a joy helper, we must allow others the freedom to follow their own heart of faith before God. If their studies and convictions would lead them differently than it has us, we must encourage them in those things, as long as we see in them a genuine heart to honor the Lord with what they under-

(see **Joy**, last page)

Disoriented and Subverted

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some (II Timothy 2:16-18).

In rejecting Paul and his unique message and apostleship, those in Ephesus and the rest of Asia had lost sight of who they were as the called-out ones from among “the nations.” They also lost sight of God’s grand purpose for the ages and where they actually fit into it.

Paul the apostle says unequivocally, “*I am the apostle of the Gentiles [i.e., the nations].*” Who, then, was their apostle? There can be no answer but that Paul was their apostle – as he is ours – for he was raised up by our ascended Lord specifically that he “*should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*” (Romans 15:16), calling out a people for His celestial purpose.

Abandoning Paul and his unique gospel, now the Ephesians had completely lost their way. They were so disoriented that they no longer even had the timing of the resurrection correct – essentially negating it. To teach that the resurrection had already occurred stood in contrast to the important truth of the verse before, that of “*rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*” Having forsaken Paul and the truth, the resurrection was now being taught out of its proper context. By removing the resurrection from its place in the future and placing it in the past, they removed it from the realm of expectation and faith, and as a result they “*overthrew [or subverted] the faith of some.*”

Sadly, for many, their faith had been subverted from the confident expectation of resurrection. The resurrection was a vital truth of anticipation taught by Paul, without which resulted in vanity (I Corinthians 15) and now “*vain babblings.*” The resurrection had become meaningless (vain) to them. They did not look to resurrection: instead the extent of their faith was now that they would go to heaven when they die, or perhaps that Christ would return and save the elect and throw the non-elect in hell.

Abraham had faith that in a future day he would have a son and that all the families of the earth would be blessed in his seed. Our faith is not only in the completed death and resurrection of Christ, but also in our redemption when He returns, ruling and reigning with Him in the ages [eons] to come. The end result of this reign will be the deliverance, reconciliation and glorious subjection of all creation back to God.

The misplacement of the resurrection stands in contrast to the glorious “*salvation which is in Christ Jesus with age-lasting [eonian] glory*” (:10) as well as the faithful sayings that we will be living together with Him, and reigning together with Him if we endure the suffering with Him (:11-13).

Joy (continued from previous page)

stand. This is because there should be greater principles that have preeminence in our own hearts – the principles of pure grace, unconditional love, genuine acceptance, individual faith and personal liberty.

Paul taught that believers with opposite understandings and practices (even if one may be weak in the faith) could both live their lives in honor unto the Lord. This does not mean that we could always walk with others in all things, but it does mean that we can support and encourage others to be faithful to the Lord based on the understanding of their own

hearts; “*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Romans 14:23).

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God (Romans 14:22).

Helping others in their freedom from religion, encouraging them in the freedom to follow their own hearts of faith wherever God may lead them, will enable us to be “*joy helpers.*”

In our daily lives let us bring joy to those around us: real joy, divine joy.