



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XI
Issue 271

Why Do the Nations Rage?

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? (Psalm 2:1; Acts 4:25).

Really, why do the nations rage?

Our friend David Buckman from Australia provides us with a concise answer to this question:

This is to provide the backdrop on the stage of God's grand display and His multifarious wisdom and powerful operations through the Son of His love towards the goal of displaying the sons of God to all the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials (Ephesians 3:8-11).

God uses all contrast to bring us to a true appreciation of Who He really is, so that we may with joy and thanksgiving appreciate all that flows from His benevolent nature.

God is all about contrasts: Good and evil; Light and dark; Day and night; Work and srest; Hot and cold; Joy and pain; Sunshine and rain; Sweet and sour. The list goes on, all carefully designed contrasts from His hand – and make no mistake about it, the contrasts are all His creation.

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things (Isaiah 45:7).

God starts His series of contrasts right off the bat in the book of Genesis. A.E. Knoch, in his classic work, *The Problem of Evil*, helps us understand the divine



necessity for such contrasts:

Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good. Good lay all about them, unmixed with evil. Health, strength, honor and companionship with one another and with God was their constant possession and privilege. Yet they knew nothing of the blessedness of these boons. This we learn from the name given to the tree which bore the forbidden fruit. To many minds it suggests only the knowledge of evil, rather than good. Yet, first and foremost, it was the tree of the knowledge of good.

Thus at the very forefront of revelation we have the principle suggested which is the key to unlock the great problems that most perplex us. It is this: All knowledge is relative: it is based on contrast. The knowledge of good is dependent upon the knowledge of evil. Hence the tree in the garden was not, as we usually think of it, merely the means of knowing evil, it was the means, primarily, of the knowledge of good. Adam and Eve had good, but did not realize it because they had had no experience of evil.

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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 (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 law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I 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; 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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PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

bsn@studysshelf.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

(clyde@studysshelf.com)

André Sneider – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office

Nathan H. Pilkington – Shipping

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From the Editor

YEAR IN REVIEW: PUBLISHING

It is hard to believe that the end of the year is upon us. I look back and rejoice at God's hand in our work.

Distribution and Publishing

Many years ago God gave me a heart for literature. God has made this one of the foremost desires in my life. He has fulfilled this desire for the past 30 years through the distribution of literature, and now in recent years through publishing as well.

As this year draws to a close we now have nearly 100 books in print, mostly classic reprints (such as those from the pen of E.W. Bullinger), but a few of my own titles as well. This year alone we have seen 28 books brought to print, not to mention dozens of booklets.

Help Scanning

Two brothers have begun assisting us in the task of scanning classics for reprint. This is a work that we so appreciate, which will allow André Sneidar to focus more attention on formatting the books for print. Thanks so much Denis Durham and Lee Peterson!

Daily Goodies

As you probably have noticed, each of the past two issues of the *BSN* have carried the announcement of new books. Each of the next few issues will continue to showcase the announcement of a new book release.

With this issue we are thankful to Father to announce the availability of our latest book *Daily Goodies: 365 Thoughts on Scriptural Truths*. This is a long-awaited and much-requested collection of choice selections from my *Daily E-mail Goodies* over the years. This is a great resource for personal and family study, as well as a valuable reference volume covering many varied biblical themes.

Speaking of the *Daily Email Goodies*, these free emails began being issued in 2003. Remarkably, this year has seen a tripling of those who receive them. If you read one that especially speaks to you, please forward it to someone whom you think would appreciate its message as well – this is how our list grows.

Great Projects Underway

We have some really exciting projects that are already underway for the coming year, D.V.¹ I so appreciate your labors with me – all of your prayers, support and encouraging words. As the new year unfolds, look for the announcement of these ventures!

Until next week,

Grace and Peace,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

1. *Deo volente*, contracted into D.V. (Latin): "God being willing"; "by God's will." – *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894

Is Your Will Really Free?

What do you get when you have free speech and then the government decides there is one thing you're not allowed to talk about? You get speech that is not free. What do you get when you have free will and God decides there is one thing that He will decide for you? You get will that is not free. Just ONE exception takes away the "free" aspect of whatever it is you believe you had. Are you really free? – Aaron Locker

RAGE (continued from front page)

The perfection of Eden's garden was greatly lacking in the one element most dear to God's heart: Adam did not and could not apprehend God's goodness. There is not the slightest hint of Adam's appreciation or thanks, or worship or adoration. He received all as a matter of course and was quite incapable of discerning or responding even to that measure of divine love which lies on the surface of His goodness. If *we* should suddenly be transformed into glorious sinless beings and transported to such scenes of sylvan perfection, we would exult and praise the author of our bliss. Not so with Adam. He knew no joy, for he knew no misery. He knew no good, for he knew no evil.

This point is most important, and we press it because it seems to be universally ignored and misrepresented. The garden of Eden has become a symbol of perfect bliss, we are always being reminded of its delights, and the happiness of the first pair has passed into a proverb. Yet there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Adam was delighted or enjoyed the bliss ascribed to him. The mere possession of good does not give a knowledge or realization of it. ... Adam had perfect health, but what was that to one who never had even heard of disease? He had abundant food, but that was nothing to him, who had never felt a famine. Even pleasure had no appeal to one who had known no pain.

The fatal lack in all of the perfection of Eden was the utter absence of any note of praise or thankfulness. Knowing no good, and utterly unacquainted with mercy or grace, Adam's heart was utterly incapable of love or adoration or worship. God's goodness did not receive the least response, because it was unknown. All that He had bestowed on Adam failed to kindle the affection for which He longed, and which is the goal of all His gifts.

How could this grave defect be remedied? There was but one way, and that way was, in the wisdom of God, provided by the tree which He placed in the midst of the garden.

Had Adam and Eve known good they would have treasured God's goodness and never would have forfeited it by disobeying His command. Yet, when they did eat of the tree, they set in motion the very forces which would remedy the defect which caused them to do it. What divine wisdom do we see here displayed! God's blessings being unappreciated, they offend Him by their deed and in so doing pave the way for an appreciation which satisfies both. Love is a marvelous schemer! ...

Had Adam never sinned he would have been a neutral, a sentient clod unfit for the full companionship of his Creator. Of one thing we may be sure: He would never have known evil; and we may be equally sure that he never would have known good. He would not curse God for sin, neither would he thank Him for His beneficence nor adore Him for His grace. He would have utterly failed to fulfill the purpose of His creation. We must always remember that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had a double function. No one forgets that it brought the knowledge of *evil*; but it was primarily the tree of the knowledge of good. Adam had no appreciation of the good by which he was surrounded. Having known nothing else, it was not good to him. He received it as a matter of course, without a thankful thought.

Adam could have lived on indefinitely in such an unappreciated paradise, but only with untold loss to himself and to his Creator. All that he saw was God's hand; His heart was veiled. Some means must be found to rouse Adam's affectionate response to the Divine yearnings. He must learn to appreciate good. How shall this be done?

It is a notable fact, and full of significance, that the tree of which Adam ate was no afterthought with God. Adam's ignorance of good did not lead to its planting. It was already grown and bearing fruit. Moreover, it was not hidden in some distant corner, in an impenetrable thicket, unapproachable and forbidding. It was in the very midst of the garden, accessible, and desirable in every way. If it was simply a question of keeping Adam from eating its fruit, it could easily have been removed. Far simpler yet, it need never have been

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Influencing Governments

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Christianity actively seeks to influence governments “for Christ.” However, God has not called the believer to “influence” governments. Rather, our sphere of divine influence is on the individual level. It is about personal relationships. We do not bring divine light for the purpose of brightening up the “*jurisdiction of darkness*,” but to contrast its darkness.

... In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).

Take, for instance, Paul in Rome. He was given by God the opportunity to have influence with Caesar’s relatives. This influence was not an earthly political influence, but a heavenly one – transforming some of them to saints.

All the saints salute you, chiefly they who are of Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22).

Those in the Body of Christ are “*neither Jew nor Gentile*.” “*Gentile*” is, of course, translated from the same Greek word (*ethnos*) that is also rendered “*nations*.” Believers are no longer a part of the “*nations*” (i.e., “*neither Jew nor Gentile*”), but a “*new creation*” (II Corinthians 5:17), the “*one new man*” (Ephesians 2:15). For the Body of Christ there is no “*us*” and “*them*” of nationalism; we are no longer American or Canadian, Virginian nor Pennsylvanian, Northerner nor Southerner, Democrat nor Republican, Conservative nor Liberal, for we, “*from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh*” (II Corinthians 5:16, CLNT).

Our brother Frank Kujawa fittingly puts it this way,

Galatians 3 tells us that we are “*neither Jew nor Gentile ...*” So what are we? A new creature in Christ. We new creatures no longer draw lines in the sand. All lines are divisions that cause conflicts. Conflicts can wound another emotionally, and ultimately lead to physical wounds, death

and wars. A person in conflict is not free.

Think of it this way: Paul tells us that we are no longer Gentiles. During his time a Gentile was any nationality other than a Jew. So, in essence Paul tells us that we are “no longer of any nationality.” Nations and national leaders are for those who do not know the Truth. The Truth has set us free.

Paul’s instructions related to human governments are limited to our attitude and responsibility toward those who are in authority. There is no record of his instruction toward our influencing, changing or revolutionizing nations. Our instructions are:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (I Timothy 2:1-2).

Paul was not politically active. Take the issue of slavery for example. We do not have any record of Paul advocating, nor campaigning for its abolition. This was not his agenda. He was not an activist for social and political change. However horrible slavery may have been, and no matter how honorable the cause of abolition may have been, such advocacy was actually below his “*high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:14). He had a celestial agenda toward which he pressed, with lesser causes left to lesser callings.

Paul did not lecture governments and leaders on the evils of slavery (or any other cause). Instead, remarkably, he instructed the slaves and their masters directly.

Servants, be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to

(see **INFLUENCING**, last page)

Paul's Roman Citizenship

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned? (A.D. 58; Acts 22:25).

Some believe that passages such as this from the *Book of Acts* somehow show that Paul was advocating involvement in Gentile politics. However, things are not always as they first appear.

The Nature of the *Book of Acts*

One must be careful about establishing doctrine from the *Book of Acts*. This book was not written by Paul, nor was it written to establish doctrine for the Body of Christ, nor was it designed to be a pattern for our practical living. Instead, *Acts* is a book that reveals the transitional history of the fall of Israel and the rise of the Body of Christ. To obtain truth for the church, the Body of Christ, one must turn to the epistles of Paul.

What Paul Was **NOT** Doing

Paul did, on occasion, appeal to Roman law, but this can't remotely be compared with being an active participant in influencing and determining governmental policy. Neither Paul nor Jesus ever tried to reform Caesar or the Roman government.

What Paul **WAS** Doing

To understand what Paul was doing when appealing to Roman law, we need the historical background to understand the passages where Paul brings up the issue of citizenship (A.D. 59; Acts 22-25).

First, let's realize that all throughout Paul's earlier 20-year apostolic ministry as recorded in the *Book of Acts* he is never recorded as having made any such reference to citizenship, even in the face of severe torture. A Roman citizen was protected from such treatment, nevertheless without any apparent appeal from him he received 39 stripes on five different occasions, and was three times beaten with rods (all prior to A.D. 57; II Corinthians 11:24). So why does he suddenly change and make an appeal?

The background of events will provide us with the answer. Paul had for "many years" (Romans 15:23) desired to make a trip to Rome; but he had been "much hindered" (Romans 15:22) because of constant delays caused by persecution from unbelieving Jews. Paul planned to make a trip to Jerusalem to deliver relief that he had been raising for the poor saints there. His plan was then to move on to Rome after that, provided that he is "delivered from them who do not believe in Judaea" (Romans 15:31).

*After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, **I must also see Rome**" (Spring, A.D. 54; Acts 19:21).*

Paul wrote to the saints at Rome to inform them of his plans to come to them.

For I long to see you [the saints in Rome], that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be established. ... I have been much hindered from coming to you; but now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, when I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey ... But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ... When I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come ... And I am sure that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. ... That I may be delivered from them who do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed (Spring, A.D. 58; Romans 1:11; 15:22-32).

While at Jerusalem heavy opposition broke out

against him. Seizing upon an opportunity to be delivered from the unbelieving Jews so that he could finally take his ministry to the capitol of the Roman Empire, he simply inquired, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25).

Paul appealed for the civil authorities to act in accordance with the law which bound *THEM*. He appealed to the principle of Roman law, an intervention that delivered him from the hands of the Jewish persecution. With his opposition constrained, Paul now only needed a means to get to Rome. He saw his opportunity by exercising Roman rights to "appeal [his case] to Caesar" (A.D.59; Acts 25:11). *Relatively*, the government saw Paul as a Roman citizen, and Paul related to their treatment of him as such – pressing upon them the standard of *their own law* – and as a result he was able to make his long-desired trip to Rome under Roman authority.

A Greater Revelation

Now, before we assume that statements found in the *Book of Acts* have some instruction for the believer to become political, we must first be careful not to anticipate revelation. This is a significant concern when reading the Scriptures. We need to recognize

RAGE (continued from page 2512)

planted. God alone was responsible for all the accessories in Adam's transgression.

It is of still greater significance that it combined in itself two inseparable functions. Perhaps we would have preferred one tree to teach the knowledge of good, and another to initiate into the knowledge of evil; but this is impossible in the very nature of things. We may strive to conceive of light apart from darkness, but it proves impossible. Light may drive out all darkness, yet its realization depends on its opposite. So good cannot be known by human beings, apart from evil. – *The Problem of Evil and the Judgments of God*, pages 27-28, 34-35

In this principle of contrasts we will find the answer to our question, "Why do the nations rage?"

In every detail of the long and sordid history of nationalism, God is building a grand contrast to His

that Paul received an abundance of progressive revelations over his some thirty-year apostleship.

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord ... through the abundance of the revelations (Autumn, A.D. 57; II Corinthians 12:1, 7).

It must be remembered that even if Paul intended to *advocate* an earthly citizenship in the *Book of Acts*, later, upon receiving greater revelation from the Lord, he clarified the issue entirely. While in a Roman prison God gave him additional revelation which he recorded to the Philippians. This was a revelation of singleness of mind; and a Roman prison was quite an amazing place for such a celestial revelation.

FOR OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (A.D. 62; Philippians 3:20).

Paul did not write, "one of our citizenships is in heaven," or "we have another citizenship in heaven," or "we have two citizenships, one of which is in heaven." Instead he writes *absolutely*, and plainly of one SINGULAR "citizenship." From his Roman bondage he boldly and without qualification declares this citizenship to be **celestial**. ■

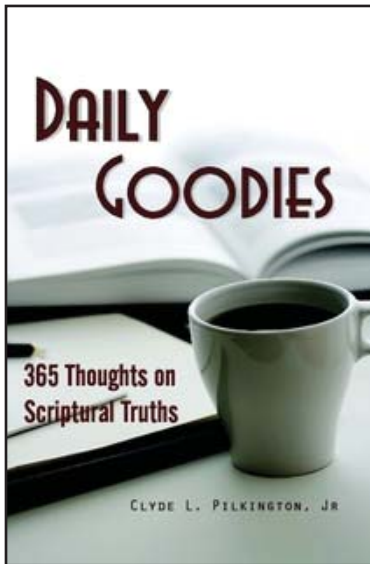
glorious Kingdom of righteousness, one that will encompass all of His creation – in the heavens and on the earth. What a transcendent contrast that will be!

As believers, God's first-fruit, we have the wonderful privilege of seeing this contrast early. Paul tells us that God has already

... Delivered us from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

Nationalism is but the "jurisdiction of darkness" (*Concordant Literal New Testament*), but we are thankful that we have been "transported" (CLNT) out of it into His Kingdom. We now have "our citizenship ... in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

Daily Goodies: 365 Thoughts on Scriptural Truths



This is a collection of choice selections from the author's *Daily E-mail Goodies*. These free daily e-mails began being issued in 2003 and contain studies on Scriptural themes.

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INFLUENCING (continued from page 2513)

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 whatever good thing any man does, the same he shall receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free. And, you masters, do the same things to them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him (Ephesians 6:5-9).

Paul's focus. Paul was the celestial apostle, writing to a celestial people, about their celestial calling and citizenship. He instructs them concerning the details of living here on foreign soil as ambassadors of their homeland, for truly we have been delivered, "... from the dominion of darkness" and have been "transferred ... into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13), having Him as our "only Potentate" ("Ruler," Darby Translation, I Timothy 6:14), with "our politics [politeuma] being in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Do not settle for less.

This passage is truly remarkable, when you stop and think about it; and it is only one example of

