



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIII
Issue 302

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

A Song in the Night

by – Cecil J. Blay
Woodley, England (1954)

The clearest intimations of mortality come to men and women in the silent watches of the night. Gone is the glitter of the day, the voices of our companions are silent, the gracious benefaction of sleep has left us, and never do we feel more vulnerable and lonely.

Every one of us basically is lonely, for even the most intimate of human relationships never penetrates to our true self; God's spirit alone can reach the innermost recesses of the human mind and personality. Without the awareness of God, and the assurance of His presence, the most self-sufficient of men in the deadly hours of night are no more than "children crying for a light, and with no language but a cry."

It is a truism that everything seems worse in the night! The problems of the day magnify themselves, the personal anxieties seem to be insuperable, and the smallest physical disability takes on fearsome proportions. The injunction "let nothing be worrying you" seems to be no more than excellent advice, for concern is a natural accompaniment of mortality, and at such a time there are no resources remaining to the unaided human will to enable it to assert itself.

Nighttime can be a rich blessing when it brings relaxing and restorative sleep; but we all experience times when, for some reason, mental or physical, instead of sleeping we find ourselves painfully awake. "Painfully," because this wakefulness is not that which is normal to the daylight hours, but is accompanied by taut nerves and vivid apprehensions. It is a wakefulness often seized on by the Adversary to remind us of "those things of which we are now ashamed," things which we can push back into the recesses of our minds when preoccupied with ordinary daylight duties, but which he flaunts in our faces in our weakest moment. Not for nothing has Satan been called the accuser of the brethren! The powers of darkness de-

light in the hours of darkness. When Judas set out to betray the Lord, John notes significantly, "and it was night."

The Adversary, with malicious skill, chooses the moment when we are at our lowest ebb to remind us how desperately we fail to adorn the teaching which we profess, so that, as Whittier so truthfully expresses it:

We bow our forehead to the dust,
We veil our eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust
A prayer without a claim.

— John G. Whittier

Sometimes it may be said that many unscriptural theories may be laid at the doors of poets and hymnwriters, and this is no doubt true; but it is also true that among the many poets who have been found in the family of God's children down the years, there are those to whom we are all indebted for their ability to express the depth of feeling common to us all, if we believe God. They could say, and say well, some of those things which at some time or another every believer wishes to say, especially the intimate and personal things, for instance:

And Thou, O Lord! by Whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee. (Whittier)

(see *SONG*, page 2768)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic 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 freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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**SACRAMENTO
FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY**

Sunday, August 7th

There will be another time of fellowship and study in Sacramento, CA, this year. It will be held August 5-7 at the Holiday Inn Express (2224 Auburn Blvd). Teachers will include: Dan Sheridan, Martin Zender, Tony Nungesser and myself.

Here is the planned schedule:

Friday Night, August 5th

There will be a dinner and get together from 5-9 pm at the home of Charles Rutsch. The address is 6737 Steele Oak Ln, Carmichael, CA; 95608. This is open to all who wish to attend.

Saturday, August 6th

9 am – Conference begins in the hotel.
12 noon to 2 pm – Break for lunch. Lunch will be provided in the hotel.
5 pm to 7 pm – Dinner is on your own (gather together at a restaurant?).
9 pm – Conference ends for the day.

9 am – Conference begins again.
12 noon to 2 pm – Lunch on your own.
6 pm – Conference ends.

If you stay at the hotel you can get a discounted rate of \$89 per night. The group code is "SCO" or mention the "Sacramento Concordant Conference" when booking. Guests may book online at www.hiexpress.com/sacramentone or call directly at 916-923-1100.

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The "Cross"

An Explanation of Its Use in the Concordant Version

by – A.E. Knoch

The "cross" has been a heavy cross for the translator of the *Concordant Version* to bear. Knowing full well that our Lord was not impaled upon a pole with a cross-piece, but on a single upright *stake*, he avoided the term and used "*stake*" for a time in his translations. Yet this proved even more unsatisfactory than the word "*cross*," for a *stake* is not used for a large pole, as a rule, and when it is, death by burning is implied. *Pale* also was tried, but now it suggests a part of a fence. Far more important than the exact form (for the cross-piece does not really alter the cause of death by nailing to an upright pole, or the resultant suffering and shame), are the spiritual thoughts which time has attached to it. It has become a standard figure of speech for trial and tribulation.

"Bearing a cross" means much more than lifting a stake or a pole. The word cross has gathered around it so much of spiritual value that it seems sacrilegious to use the other terms, which correct only the outward, material appearance, yet discard the inward spiritual aspect.

The *Concordant Version* seeks to conform as closely as practicable to the outward form as well as the inward spirit, and, in most cases, it has been possible to do so; but when repeated efforts fail to fulfill our wishes in this regard, we fall back upon other means of revealing and guarding the truth. In the *lexicon* [*Keyword Concordance*] we can give the *facts*, and in the *sublinear* we can cleave closer to them than in the idiomatic version. Those who have written, criticizing the rendering "*cross*" and "*crucify*," seeking to correct us on this point, should consult these before writing, for *these* give the more exact equivalents, without observing English idiom and usage. The *lexicon* reads, "an upright stake or pale, *without any cross-piece*" (page 322), and the *sublinear* has "*pale*" throughout, with "*impale*" for the verb. I will gladly bear this figurative "*cross*" for the sake of the saints. If I translated otherwise, a much greater mob would seek to impale me; but both would probably join and cry "crucify him!" If there is a better solution we will gladly adopt it.

Unsearchable Riches, Volume 42 (1951)
Abridged

SONG (continued from front page)

Scripture has a good deal to say about night to us who are described as “*children of the light and of the day*” (I Thessalonians 5:5), and one of its most remarkable disclosures is that, to God, darkness and light are *both alike*.

If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,” even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee (Psalm 139:12).

We are not here being told that God, being omniscient, can see in the dark. God is not a man with man’s eyes. He is far more than that, for darkness makes no difference to Him, it is all the same as if it were day. “*He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps*” (Psalm 121:4). We should all be aware of this, but with mortal minds it is difficult to comprehend that God is always there, omnipresent, and that, even in our bleakest hour, He is immediately accessible to our faith.

Speak to Him, thou, for He heareth,
And spirit with spirit can meet;
For closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet.

— Alfred Tennyson

In the wakeful silence of the night, when all of the stridency of earth is dimmed and distant, we have an opportunity for a degree of intimacy of spirit hardly possible at any other time.

The Adversary’s dismal apparitions, which can make us feel so miserable, can be entirely banished if we remember, as Paul wrote for us, that “*the Lord is near.*” The memories which shame us, yield to a better remembrance, in the words of the Indian convert, Krishnu Pal (1764-1822):

O thou my soul, forget no more
The Friend Who all thy miseries bore.
Let every Idol be forgot.
But O my soul, forget Him not.

Wakefulness at night was no stranger to the apostle Paul, and we recall that he and Silas were not only wakeful but also in dire discomfort when they set that striking example to us all. They had been flogged, thrust into an inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks. Here is misery indeed!

Now at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and sang hymns to God. Now the prisoners listened to them (Acts 16:25).

Few of us will ever be in such a condition as were these two men. We are more likely to be imprisoned by our own depression of mind. If Paul and Silas could sing a song of praise in the night, how much more should we! On the mental and spiritual plane the result will be the same; all of our doors will be opened and all of our bands loosed.

A great merit of the Scripture record is that it always tells the truth – not only about God, but also about the men who worship Him. Thus, since they are men, that record is one of failures as well as of faith. It is for our encouragement that we should realize that the great and good men of Scripture did not always walk on the high places.

David, with all of his glorious thoughts of God, still writes,

I stretched out my hand in the night, my soul refused to be comforted (Psalm 77:2).

Job, too, said,

In the night season my bones are pierced in me, and the pains that gnaw me take no rest (Job 30:17).

Yet Elihu reminds him,

Where is God, my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night? (Job 35:10).

The silent emptiness of night is prone to make us vividly conscious of self, physically, mentally and spiritually; a tiny self lost in a universe of infinite dimension. Despite all we know of Scripture, we wonder how God can possibly concern Himself with our personal welfare, since each one is just a minute fragment of a teeming race which is reproducing itself at a rate of something like five thousand souls every minute.

We look through the window at the starlit sky and murmur to ourselves,

When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou dost direct – what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? ... (Psalm 8:3-4).

Yet this is precisely the point: God *is* mindful of man;

not only in the mass, but much more individually. That is the reason for our song in the night, a song which comes to us just as quickly as we leave our obsession with self and engage all of our faculties in concentration upon Him.

To concentrate upon Him is to fill the mind with recollections of His Word; and many will join in the testimony that His Word, so remembered, is indeed spirit and life, and a potent source of ease for mind and body. The weight lifts, the depression fades away, the tormented thoughts revolving as a treadmill in our minds give place to a harmony that uplifts the heart in thankfulness.

We have noted David's refusal to be comforted, but listen to him again:

*My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips:
When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches* (Psalm 63:5-6).

He exhorts his hearers to follow his example:

Let the saints be joyful in glory, Let them sing upon their beds (Psalm 149:5).

Blessed as sleep undoubtedly is, we cannot follow out David's recommendations while we are sleeping, but there is not any doubt at all of their restorative effect upon us at those times when sleep eludes us. Many will testify that such preoccupation with our God instead of with ourselves eventuates in a calm confidence which relaxes the mind in delighted trust, so that almost before we realize it our smiling eyes are closed,

For so He giveth His beloved sleep (Psalm 127:2).

We are reminded again in Proverbs that true wisdom, found only in the knowledge of God, has this soothing effect on the believer:

*When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:
yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet* (Proverbs 3:24).

Scripture is full of song, as well it might be considering the wonderful God it reveals, One "greatly to be praised." Messengers and throngs, we are told, sing praises to His name, and every instrument of music is pressed into service in the attempt to give at least some adequacy to the delight of those who know His goodness. Yet the song in the night must be especially

precious to Him, coming as it does through faith out of weakness, and being as it always is an expression of the believer's personal love and trust.

All as God wills, who wisely heeds
To give or to withhold,
And knoweth more of all my needs
Than all my prayers have told. (Whittier)

In the night there is no audience but God alone, no corporate fervor, no swelling orchestra. Probably there is no more than a faint melody, but we may be sure that He hears it nevertheless.

In fact, such songs need not even be vocalized, for when Paul writes to the Ephesians he says,

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father always for all things in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19-20).

We may read the words "speaking to yourselves" to mean speaking one to the other, but equally we can take them as meaning a deliberate act of self-reminding, rehearsing in our hearts and minds those great words of truth which make such superb melody. The Psalms come from the Scriptures, but equally the spiritual songs come from the rich experience of fellow believers who have tested the truth of these same Scriptures and have expressed that experience in words for all of the saints to share.

The test of a spiritual song is that its sentiments should correspond closely with the truth of Scripture; but even in songs which fail to pass this test in their entirety owing to the unfortunate persistence in the writer's mind of some religious dogma, there is frequently revealed some flash of insight which we can appropriate for ourselves with great profit. It is revealing to notice that with many of the great writers of such songs and hymns there is an instinctive reaching out to the great truth, not permitted by their orthodox theology, that since God is good His goodness must at last reach out to every being in the remotest corner of His universe. The instinct of the poet, sensitive to the nature of the God Whom he worships, is often stronger and more reliable than the creedal system that he is supposed to accept.

On every occasion we should give thanks to God, and not least in those sleepless hours of the night. Indeed, it is in that very stillness that the phrases of Scripture
(see *SONG*, page 2771)

Tradition versus Truth

Invalidating the Word of God by Human Tradition

by – Victor E. Jacobson

Author of *15 Bombs that Sank My Theological Ship*
(see *Bible Student's Notebook* #106)

You are holding the tradition of men ... Invalidating the Word of God by your tradition ... (Mark 7:8-13).

Invalidating the Word of God by human tradition is about the worst thing a man can do. It is a slap in God's face, an offense of the first magnitude – but it is more than that. It is a tampering with the stop and go signs of the universe. Such “monkey business” is more potent with dire calamity than the splitting of the atom. It is at the root of all religion, and is the most characteristic sin of today. It is the essence of all error, the cause of sectarianism, the mother of creeds and confusion.

Let us see just what these men, to whom Jesus talked, did.

Briefly, they had figured out a pious fraud to get a man's money for themselves. They taught that money for one's father and mother, under the precept of God, should be designated “devoted.” “Devoted,” mind you, to things more sacred than the sustenance of father and mother. The priests needed a new stained glass window or something. Religion must be sustained, the priests and hypocrites must live, and live luxuriously. Oh, the hypocrisy of it! – to think that millions of people fall for it!

Let me show you how that same racket is being worked today. How do the traditions of men invalidate the Word of God today? I shall give the answer in a few propositions.

FAVOR WITH GOD

Any teaching that leads a sinner to think that there is anything whatever for him or anyone else to do or say to increase his favor with God is false, and invalidates the Word of God. All that is necessary is the presentation of Christ Jesus according to the Scriptures for faith's reception (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

Repentance, penance, altar calls, sob stories, raising hands, signing cards and joining church throw smoke in the eyes of sincere seekers.

rites and sacraments

Any teaching that would influence a *believer* to think that any rite or so-called “sacrament” can bring him closer to Christ than he already is, being sealed by the Spirit of God, repudiates the Word of God. The offense of tradition is rank in this respect when it comes to water baptism, confirmation and church membership. Water baptism administered by anyone not commissioned to do so (and there are none such today!) is taking the Name of God in vain. It is pathetic that Christendom has failed to see that the apostle to the nations said he was *not* commissioned to be baptizing.

HOLY PLACES

Any teaching that intimates that there is any place more sacred than others to which a man must go to worship God is false, and invalidates the Word of God. Know you not that you are the temple of God? If God dwells in our hearts by faith, why should we ask Him to meet us in some building? Or shall we assume that architecture and costly robes and solemn music attract Him? There is no “house of God” in the world today. The Romans destroyed the last one.

DIVINE ADMINISTRATIONS

Any teaching that ignores the divine administrations and applies the four “gospels” and the rest of the circumcision writings to us of the nations is false, and repudiates the Word of God. We never have been commissioned to disciple all nations, baptizing them ►

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit. The assignment is to be carried out by Israel's apostles. Who ever heard of a gentile raising the dead? Yet that is what the apostles were told to do.

ISRAEL'S LAW

Any attempt to saddle us with the law of Moses, its sabbath and its tithes, or its priesthood, or with the edicts of Constantine on Sunday keeping is false, and repudiates the Word of God. Read Galatians and Colossians.

CHRIST! NOT CREEDS!

My friend, I can sympathize with you as you read

SONG (continued from page 2769)

and song may return most easily to our minds. Did not Elihu say that God gives songs in the night? This is indeed a gracious and welcome gift, and as we thus praise Him and think quietly upon His truth, the eyes of our hearts become enlightened,

That more and more a providence
of love is understood,
making the springs of time and sense
sweet with eternal good. (Whittier)

However, as Paul told the Thessalonians, "*we are not of the night nor of the darkness*" for we are "*sons of light and sons of the day.*" Darkness is foreign to our nature, for we should walk as sons of light. The night is a temporary earthly phenomenon to which our present terrestrial bodies are subject, and like all of our earthly experiences it is designed to teach us by contrast, as it indeed does at the lighting up into each new day, as John Keble wrote in his fine old hymn (1827),

New every morning is the love
Our waking and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life and power and thought.

It must be as true of those who are heirs of a celestial destiny as it is of those who shall inherit the New Jerusalem, that "*there shall be no night there,*" and though sorrow shall endure for a night, joy comes in the morning.

The night is far spent and the day is at hand, a day of a very special nature, *that* day. The day of Him Who is the Bright and Morning Star. The night is always darkest just before the dawn, both in the spiritual as well as

this. You probably feel like saying, "What is left for us?" I answer, "Everything!"

You have a risen Christ enthroned in the heavens, and you need nothing more. Anything more will but dim His glory.

Read Romans and see what you have. Read Ephesians and see what you have. Read the Sacred Scriptures more and forget about the creeds!

Unsearchable Riches

Volume 42, 1951

Abridged

in the physical sense. We should always remember this as we awaken out of sleep.

And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west winds play;
And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day. (Whittier)

God Leads Us Along

In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet,
God leads His dear children along;
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet,
God leads His dear children along.

Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright,
God leads His dear children along;
Sometimes in the valley, **in darkest of night**,
God leads His dear children along.

Though sorrows befall us and evils oppose,
God leads His dear children along;
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,
God leads His dear children along.

Away from the mire, and away from the clay,
God leads His dear children along;
Away up in glory, eternity's day,
God leads His dear children along.

Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
In the night season and all the day long.

George A. Young (1903)

The Story of Life

Man's Version vs. God's Version

by – Aaron Locker

Man's Version of the Story of Life:

God created a creature. Satan sneaked up behind God's back and snatched that creature from God's hand, and as a result evil became the owner of everything God ever made. God spent the next 4000 years trying to get His creation back to no avail and, finally, as a last ditch effort to save at least a few, God killed His Own Son and then brought Him back to life. Satan saw this and laughed, saying, "Is this the head crushing you warned me about?" God knew that evil was stronger than good, and was thankful for the few creatures He was lucky enough to get back from the accident He made in the beginning. God learned His lesson and vowed to pay more attention next time and thus, the few creatures God got back lived happily ever after – of course "happily ever after" was only possible by God removing the brains of those He saved so that they didn't realize that almost everyone they ever met was, at any given moment, burning alive, screaming and begging for a Savior that would pretend not to hear them.

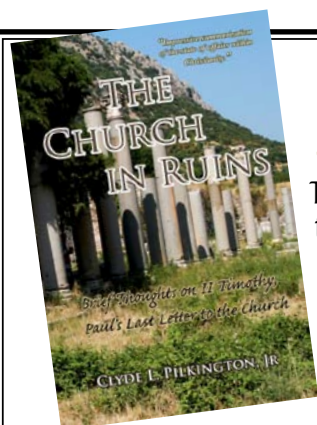
Good story, huh? Yeah, I know; mankind has a really sick imagination. Thankfully, we have another side of the story given to us by our Creator so that we don't believe ridiculous things like man's version of the story.

God's Side of the Story:

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:18-21).

Yes, that's right, folks! Happily ever after really *does* exist. If sin was stronger than grace, happiness would be a ridiculous concept. If condemnation came upon more men than justification, pessimism would be a reasonable response to the story. If more were made sinners than were made righteous, man's version of the story may be accurate.

As for me, I believe God's version. Why not be as "optimistic" as God is? Why not **truly** trust in Him? Should our trust in an infinite being be finite? No, the only appropriate amount of trust to place in an infinitely trust-worthy being is an infinite amount. I encourage you to let God be true and every man a liar.



THE CHURCH IN RUINS

Brief Thoughts on II Timothy, Paul's Last Letter to the Church

This brief survey of Paul's last epistle will reveal that while almost 2000 years have transpired, the condition of the church has remained the same, and indeed has worsened in accordance with Paul's warning to Timothy.

This book is not a call for a re-awakening of "the church," because it is apparent that this is not Father's plan. Rather, it is a call to individual men – men whose place in the Christian religious system has left them empty, stagnant, and restless – to awaken to Father's call to be His faithful servant and stand outside of that system to look for other faithful men as well.

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*An outstanding little book, one
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