



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XVI  
Issue 386-7

# The Power of God

by — John H. Essex (1907-1991)  
Nottingham, England

People often talk in a casual way about the power of God. They call Him, "Almighty," but do they really understand what this implies, and do they always give Him the glory that is due to Him in respect of His power?

Do they, for instance, acknowledge Him as David acknowledged Him before the congregation of Israel, when he said,

*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; this is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head over all (I Chronicles 29:11).*

It is our sole desire in this study to exalt Him in our minds and in our hearts.

Now the power of God is made apparent in many ways. Near to where this is being written, there is a long double avenue of trees. During the winter, all of the boughs are empty, but within a couple of months of the commencement of spring, they are invariably filled with thousands upon thousands of leaves. How do the leaves come there if not by the power of God? Who instructs all of the animals in the ways of life, and directs bees in the building of their combs, and tells birds how to construct their nests? We may call this *instinct*, but Who puts the instinct in their tiny brains?

We could write at great length on God's power in creation, and there are many passages in the Scriptures which direct our thoughts to this theme. For

example, David again, in Psalm 147:4-5, says,

*He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.*

Isaiah 40:26 gives a similar witness:

*Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth.*

Or, we could consider the greatness of God's power in sustaining His creation, in supplying it with food day in and day out. The most outstanding example of this was in His providing the Israelites with manna from heaven over a period of forty years while they wandered in the wilderness. If the manna had fallen every day, it would have been miraculous enough – though some might have attempted to explain it away as being a peculiar phenomenon of nature – but for it to fall for six days, and miss every seventh day, and for a double portion to be made available every sixth day to make up for the lack on the seventh day, is something that cannot possibly be accounted for except as a demonstration of the mighty power of God (Exodus 16:11-36).

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

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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).

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).

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# Strictly Personal

## FIRST QUARTERLY PA MEETING

Our first Pennsylvania quarterly gathering is history. It was an amazing weekend. We had 33 over the course of the weekend. It ended up being a snowy, bitter weekend, which of course is no surprise for our area in the winter.

### Thursday

Our first guest to arrive for the weekend was my dear brother, friend and editor, André Sneider from Virginia. He arrived the earliest as he did not want to miss a single part of the weekend.

Martin returned from his North Carolina teaching journeys late on Thursday night, and traveled on Friday to pick up Terry Clemens from Canada.

### Friday

The first guests to arrive on Friday were the Michels from Erie, PA (James, Susan, and Jacob), followed by the Best brothers from Michigan (Jim and Gary). Martin and Terry arrived later in the evening. It was a great evening of dinner and fellowship.

### Saturday

We had quite the fellowship and informal study throughout the day on Saturday. Doug Witherpoon from Virginia, and Stephen Hill from Du Bois (along with his children) joined us mid-day. Marian Hoover from Connecticut, and Pam Spires from Virginia joined us in the evening. It was a very full and heart-warming day.

On Sunday morning, all of us staying at the house joined others at a local restaurant for a couple of hours of brunch-fellowship. Joining us were: Keith & Salina (Altoona), Win & Diane (Linden), Jim & LuAnn (Lock Haven), Lisa & Terry (Williamsport), Neal Locker (Hollidaysburg), and Marty & Sarah (Rolling Springs).

After our morning fellowship, Deb Capece (Tylersport), Julia Tobias along with her daughter Melanie (Uniontown), and Bill Morgart (Richland) joined us at the Johnstown airport for our time of study. How full and moved my heart was during the teaching of God's Word from Jim Baskin, Stephen Hill, Martin and myself. You can hear the teaching from the weekend at:

[www.fellowshipinn.com/videos.html](http://www.fellowshipinn.com/videos.html)

After the meeting a few of the saints came home with us for supper and continued fellowship. Doug, Pam and Marian stayed over until Monday with us, and André until Tuesday.

You can also see a few pictures from the weekend online:

[www.fellowshipinn.com/gallery.html](http://www.fellowshipinn.com/gallery.html)

Now, we can hardly wait until our next quarterly meeting! In the meantime, why not check out our schedule at our Fellowship Inn website and plan a time to come and visit us for some personal fellowship and study?

<http://www.fellowshipinn.com>

Until next week, remember that you are greatly loved of God!

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

**POWER** (continued from front page)

Or, we might consider God's directive power in the universe – how He guides the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars on their various paths, so that day regularly follows day, and the seasons succeed each other in consistent sequence, and eclipses of heavenly bodies can be foretold many, many years in advance with extreme accuracy.

## PHARAOH

These are all what we may perhaps term *general* indications or evidences of God's power; but in the Scriptures we have more *specific* demonstrations, and it is to these that we would now direct our hearts. They are brought to our attention by Paul, and the first of these, in point of time, is God's dealings with Pharaoh, referred to in Romans 9:17,

*For the scripture is saying to Pharaoh that "For this selfsame thing I rouse you up, so that I should be displaying in you My power, and so My name should be published in the entire earth."*

Paul is, of course, quoting from Exodus 9:16. Remember the circumstances of the time. The Israelites, whose forbears had entered Egypt with Jacob because of a famine in Canaan, had lived there in comparative comfort until there had been a change in the dynasty of the ruling Pharaohs. As the Scripture puts it, a new king had arisen who knew not Joseph, and he began to oppress the Israelites most severely, indeed (Exodus 1:9ff). This oppression continued for quite a while until Moses was appointed by God to deliver His people from Pharaoh's successor. Moses and his brother, Aaron, presented themselves several times before the new monarch and demanded in the name of the Lord the release of the captive people. Again and again Pharaoh refused to let them go.

*Who is the Lord? That I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go* (Exodus 5:2).

It was this haughty question of Pharaoh that was answered by the succession of plagues which God sent on Egypt. In the deliverance that followed the plagues, the host of Pharaoh was engulfed in the waters of the sea, while the Israelites passed through

onto dry land, the waters being held back on either side like walls to allow them to pass through.

Thus the power of God was demonstrated in a way that was to be remembered by Israel for all generations to come. On numerous occasions, we find this deliverance from Egypt mentioned in the Old Testament. It is the supreme example in ancient times of God's power.

What did this deliverance really signify? Was it a case of God pitting His strength against that of a man? Surely not, for Isaiah tells us that *whole nations* are as mere specks of dust in the scales as far as God is concerned (Isaiah 40:15). No, it was not God versus man, but *God versus Pharaoh* and *everything that Pharaoh stood for*. Pharaoh, as head of a nation that desired the subjugation of God's own people, was Satan's tool in the Adversary's attempt to thwart the purpose of God.

Throughout the Scriptures we find that, whenever God makes a move that would seem to reveal His intentions, the Adversary is at hand with attempts to upset it. When God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, Satan was quickly on the scene in the guise of a serpent. When God indicated His choice of David as Israel's king, the Adversary confronted him with a giant, Goliath (I Samuel 17:4), in an obvious attempt to destroy the monarchy. When the Messiah was actually born in Bethlehem, Satan through Herod attempted to massacre Him, but was thwarted through Joseph and Mary being warned by God in a dream and fleeing into Egypt (Matthew 2:12). We could find other instances of the Adversary's intervention; it is not in his nature to be idle or to stand by and let God's purposes proceed unopposed. He was created an Adversary.

Here, in Egypt, he was undoubtedly the force behind Pharaoh in his many attempts to suppress the Israelites. Who but Satan would inspire one Pharaoh to issue an edict that all the male children should be killed as soon as they were born (Exodus 1:22)? Who but Satan would inspire his successor to increase the burdens of the enslaved nation, to expect them to make bricks without straw, and to appoint taskmasters to see that their task did not diminish (5:18-19), and all of this because Moses had approached Pharaoh in the name of the Lord?

Yes, this was a deliverance of God's people, not just from Pharaoh, but from all of the forces of evil that were ranged behind Pharaoh at that time, and which undoubtedly sought the destruction of Israel as God's people. As a rescue operation, it became the standard of God's power to save His own, and as such it is mentioned over and over again in the sacred records concerning Israel. For that nation, it contains an assurance for the future. Though Israel might be persecuted to the limit, she could not be exterminated; the bush might burn with a fierce flame, but it would not be consumed.

Surely there is still more behind the matter than this. If all that was at stake was the deliverance of God's people, why the succession of plagues? It was because the Egyptians worshipped a multitude of false gods and regarded all kinds of things as sacred. Each of the plagues attacked one or more of their gods and proved that the God of Moses was superior to them all!

The things that the Egyptians worshipped became an abomination to them. The idol river, the Nile, was turned into blood in the first plague and became abhorrent. The goddess Hekt, with the head of a frog, could not prevent swarms of these creatures invading the homes. The sacred scarab could not stop the invasion of beetles or flies. Ra, the sun-god, could not dispel the darkness that could be felt. Apis, the sacred bull, could not protect his species from the murrain.

Not one of the gods of Egypt – not all of the gods combined – could save the country's firstborns. When God pronounced the destruction of Egypt's firstborns, He said,

*Against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment. I am the Lord (Exodus 12:12).*

Yet He could save all the firstborns of Israel, and also deliver His own firstborn, the nation itself, for He spoke of Israel as,

*My son; even My firstborn (Exodus 4:22).*

Yes, Pharaoh at this time was the earthly representative of all false worship; the supporter of every type

of alien god; the willing tool of Satan in his antagonism to the worship of the one true God. He was the exemplar of that type, of which Paul speaks in Romans 1, who would change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being and flying creatures (such as scarabs) and quadrupeds (sacred bulls) and reptiles (frogs and serpents) (Romans 1:23).

It does not matter what gods people may set up in place of the One true God, whether they be actual idols, or abstract images like wealth, ambition, social prominence and the like; they, in His own due time, will be rendered as impotent, and will be seen to be as impotent, as were the multitudinous gods of Egypt.

The true position is as stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6,

*We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God except One. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him.*

Thus there are only two Beings in the universe before Whom we should bow the knee: God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and we only worship the latter because God Himself has ordained it so, by creating Him as His true Image (cf. Colossians 1:15). Worship of any other only detracts from the homage that is due to God Himself and to His Son, Whom He has glorified.

## THE WORD OF THE CROSS<sup>1</sup>

In the course of time, there came a moment when it appeared that Satan was in full command of the situation. The Son of God was hanging, apparently helpless, on a cross – on a rude execution stake reserved for slaves and criminals of the lowest classes. The ►

1. i.e., "An upright stake or pale, without any crosspiece." – A.E. Knoch (*Concordant Keyword Concordance*, page 63). For more information read **THE "CROSS"**: *Was Christ Nailed to a "Cross" or a "Stake"?* by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.



God Who had worked wonders in Egypt and delivered an entire nation from the oppressors could not save His own Son from an ignominious death at the hands of mere humans. At least, that is how it *seemed!* Yet Paul could afterwards speak of this event in this way:

*Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ may be made void. For the word of the cross is stupidity, indeed, to those who are perishing, yet to us who are being saved it is the power of God (I Corinthians 1:17-18).*

The word of the cross! How can the cross ever be a demonstration of God's power? The cross was simply a stake in the ground, on which hung the body of a dying man.

This is how it is seen by the vast majority of those who take any notice of it at all, and this includes many believers. Some time ago, when speaking about the cross to a gathering of Christian believers, we were told by one person that he could appreciate how one could benefit from the example of the life of Jesus on earth, but he could not see how one could possibly benefit from a dying man hanging on a cross. He regarded the death of the Lord as something encompassed solely by humans, as a culmination of their reaction to His ministry, but having no basic part in God's purpose. Yet even Peter, on the day of Pentecost, realized and proclaimed the fact that Jesus, though murdered by men, was in fact,

*Given up in the specific counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23).*

Perhaps the best way to see how the cross becomes a medium for the display of God's power is to examine the end product of its effect. We find this in Colossians 1:20, where we read of Christ, picking up from :18,

*He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making*

*peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens.*

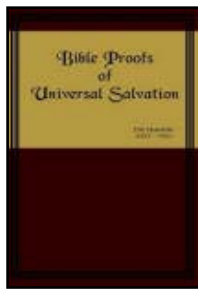
*Making peace through the blood of His cross!* The cross is a peacemaking factor, resulting in reconciliation between God and His creation – and if the reconciliation is to be permanent, complete and all-embracing, the peace must be absolute, genuine and unassailable.

The way of the cross is the only way by which God could secure lasting and genuine peace between Himself and His creatures. If there had been any other way than the ignominious crucifixion of His own Son, we may be sure God would have chosen it.

Notice how the two terms “*blood*” and “*cross*” are brought together in this passage. The “*blood*” speaks of a sacrifice, the “*cross*” proclaims the nature of that sacrifice. There were other ways by which Jesus might have died, and still have been a Sacrifice, but none of these would have achieved the desired result; for incorporated in the cross was a curse (Galatians 3:13), and Christ, when He (as the One not knowing sin) became a sin offering for our sakes (II Corinthians 5:21), took on Himself all the ignominy, the shame, the opprobrium which comes on the malefactor who faces execution. He became,

*Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).*

What a world of significance there is in that word “*even*”!



***Bible Proofs of Universal Salvation***  
 by — J.W. (John Wesley) Hanson  
 (#2895) 137 pages, PB  
 \$9.95 (\$13.94 with s&h)

This work presents Bible proof of universal salvation containing the principle passages of Scripture that teach the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. The author attempts to present the prominent considerations that are contained in the Bible in support of the final redemption of all souls.



Reconciliation between God and His creatures can never be effected so long as they continue to offend Him. During the period covered by the Hebrew Scriptures, He made provision for His special people, Israel, to placate Him by offering sacrifices; but these had to be renewed year by year continually, and were, at best, only a covering for sin. It was impossible for men, of themselves, to eradicate sin from their beings, and it was equally impossible for the yearly sacrifices of bulls and goats to take it away. Yet God provided a way by which sin could be eradicated. He placed the whole burden of sin once and for all on the shoulders of His own Son, the Son of His infinite love, and had it crucified with Him on that cross at Calvary. All that was offensive in creation was thus disposed of once and for all time. In this way He was able to meet the demands of His own righteousness, and embark on a New Creation in which sin would have no place at all. As all of the differences and enmities and estrangements between God and His creatures are the consequence of sin, this effective method of dealing with sin paves the way for complete reconciliation.

The power of the cross lies in this: The cross was the most dishonorable death that man could devise to expose the High and Holy Son of God to shame and contempt. In crucifying the Lord of Glory, men committed an act which should have angered God exceedingly, and brought down on the whole creation the righteous indignation of an offended Deity. Instead, in the wisdom of God, it became the act which *conciliated* Him to the world, and caused Him to invite the world in turn to become conciliated to Him (II Corinthians 5:19-20). When *both* sides are conciliated to each other, peace is established between them, and complete *reconciliation* is the result.

With the Son of God hanging dead on the cross, the purpose of God seemed to have come to an end in failure. God must indeed be weak if He could not save His own Son from such an ignominious fate. This is how it would appear to the world. This is how it still appears to many today. This is how it certainly appeared to the throngs of Jews, Greeks and Romans milling around that cross at that time.

Let us have a closer look at the scene, which occurred over 1900 years ago. We are standing just outside of

the old city of Jerusalem. At that time, the Romans were firmly established as the ruling power, having overcome Greece two or three centuries before. Nevertheless, neither the Greek language nor Grecian customs were obliterated by the Roman conquest; nor, for that matter, were the Jewish religious observances. Hence there were in Jerusalem at this time three cultures existing side by side simultaneously. There was the culture that was Israel, based on the law given to Moses, but added to by various human interpretations and further regulations, so that it became a hybrid Judaism; there was the culture that was Greece, based on the theories of its philosophers, and appealing mainly to the intellect; and there was the culture that was Rome, based on physical power and conquest.

*Israel, Greece, Rome.* These were the three cultures which, at that point of time, represented the whole of humanity, and in which, on that most momentous day, *the whole of humanity was being judged*. How did humanity react to the sight of its potential Savior on the cross? To the Jews, obsessed with their religion, the cross was a snare – they could find no place for it in their teachings. To the Greeks, seeking wisdom from their own philosophers, it was stupidity – complete foolishness (I Corinthians 1:22-23). To the Romans, drunk with the power of conquest, it was sheer weakness – impotence. Why, even their own soldiers had mocked the One Who was hanging there aloft, saying,

*If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself*  
(Luke 23:37).

Let us here note again that *all humanity* – past, present and future – was represented at that particular point of time by the three cultures of Israel, Greece and Rome; and that, just as each of these cultures was found wanting as its samples paraded before the cross, so, too, humanity as a whole is found wanting when brought figuratively to the same position. Those living today are, by and large, no different from those living at that time.

Israel, Greece, Rome! There was no question of anybody being in doubt as to the identity of the One Who was being crucified, for an inscription in three languages was nailed to the cross, and we are specifically told that these languages were Hebrew, Greek and ►



Latin (John 19:20). The language of Israel, the language of Greece, and the language of Rome. “*Jesus the Nazarene ... King of the Jews*” (Luke 23:38) – so the placard announced. Here was the true King of that nation which God had chosen to be the channel of blessing to all families of the earth. Yet He was Jesus, the Nazarene – a term of reproach – and He was to be despised and rejected by all three sections of humanity. In the eyes of the world He is still despised today.

Dr. F.W. Boreham, in one of his essays,<sup>2</sup> points out that each of these three sections of humanity, each of these types of civilization, had its own distinctive ideal.

The ideal of the Jews was *light*. See how the word is frequently repeated in one of their greatest prophets. We quote from the Concordant rendering of Isaiah:

*The people walking in darkness will see a great **light**; dwellers in a death-shadowed land, **light** is bright over them* (Isaiah 9:2).

*I will give you ... for a **light** of the nations* (42:6).

*Radiant will be your **light** in the darkness* (58:10).

***Light up, light up, Jerusalem!** For come has your **light**, and the glory of Yahweh over you is radiant ... and the nations will go to your **light**, and kings to the brightness of your radiance* (60:1, 3).

*No further shall your sun set, nor your moon be gathered in, for Yahweh shall be yours for **light eonian*** (60:20).

These are all prophecies from Israel’s inspired writings; yet, when He came Who declared Himself to be the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5), Israel turned away from Him.

The ideal of the Greeks was *knowledge*. Their source of inspiration was the school, the academy, the porch of the philosopher. They reveled in the theories of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; in the discoveries of their mathematicians and scientists, like Euclid and Archimedes; and in the writings of their

historians and poets – but the highest knowledge is to be found in Christ,

*In Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed* (Colossians 2:3).

The Greeks could learn nothing from that lone Figure hanging on a cross. To them, the whole affair was sheer stupidity. It did not fit into their philosophies at all.

The ideal of the Romans was *glory* – the glory of military conquest, of the physical strength envisaged in mighty armies, in legions of soldiers spreading out to all corners of the world. The glory of Rome was the dream of the Caesars. It was a glory often built on cruelty; in the words of Byron, people were “butchered to make a Roman holiday.” To be of Roman citizenship gave great advantage over those less fortunate. We remember how Paul on one occasion claimed his Roman citizenship, and so was saved from a flogging (Acts 22:29).

The Romans could see nothing of glory in the apparent weakness of a Man hanging on one of their posts that they reserved for the execution of disobedient slaves and criminals of the lower classes. How could this add to the glory of their Empire?

Should they all have known? They could not have known the *secret* of Christ, which was hidden in God before the eons, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Corinthians 2:8). Sufficient evidence that He was Israel’s Messiah had been given to them. He had been preaching among them for several years, and His reputation had spread. Moreover, though He had been sent primarily to minister to the “*lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matthew 15:24), *all* sections of the community had nevertheless experienced a sample of His healing powers as a witness of His mission and a preview of the Kingdom which He had proclaimed. Among His own people He had performed many miracles, including the raising of the dead; but we are specifically told of one instance where the recipient of His healing powers was a *Greek* – the Syrophenician woman of Mark 7:26, whose daughter had a demon. This was the woman who refused to go away when told that it was not ideal for the children’s scraps to be given to puppies, but pressed her claim with the remark,

2. F.W. Boreham, D.D., *A Portrait of God*, published in *Ships of Pearl* (London: Epworth Press, 1935).



Yes, Lord. For the puppies also, underneath the table, are eating the scraps from the little children (Matthew 15:27).

Then there was the case of the Roman centurion, whose servant was on the point of death, yet was healed because of his master's faith, the like of which Jesus had not seen anywhere in Israel (Matthew 8:5-13). The Greek woman and the Roman centurion both believed in Jesus and acknowledged His authority, and by so doing showed forth the darkness of their compatriots, *for it only needs one ray of light to show up the surrounding darkness.*

Humanity, as it surged around the cross on that eventful day nearly 2,000 years ago, was engulfed in darkness – an unnatural darkness, which in itself revealed the power of God over the elements, for it descended abruptly at noonday, and was lifted at three o'clock in the afternoon (Matthew 27:45). During this period of darkness Christ was a sin offering, bearing on Himself the sins of all humanity – but the world did not know this. The actual physical darkness that surrounded the cross symbolized the intense spiritual darkness that lay on men's hearts. Humanity today is, by and large, still engulfed in this same spiritual darkness.

There are exceptions, for Paul tells us, in II Corinthians 4:6, that,

*God Who says that, out of darkness light shall be shining, is He Who shines in our hearts, with a view to the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

The apostle sees the drama enacted at Calvary in quite a different way from his contemporaries. What was a snare to Israel, and stupidity to the Greeks, and sheer weakness to the Romans, Paul sees as the *power of God* and the *wisdom of God* (I Corinthians 1:24), and the starting point of an evangel which not only brings salvation to humanity and reconciliation to the universe, but, in so doing, enhances beyond measure the *glory of Christ*, as the true Image of the invisible God (II Corinthians 4:4), and therefore equally surely enhances to a superlative degree the *glory of God* Himself. Thus Paul can, in effect, declare that God, Who is saying, "*Out of darkness light shall be shining,*" is He Who is shining in our hearts, *not with the light (or illumination) that Israel claimed to possess, nor with any of the so-called knowledge of which Greece was proud, nor with any of that fleeting glory that Rome had acquired – not with any of these, nor indeed with anything that could be as-* ►

## WWW.URQA.COM *Universal Reconciliation Questions & Answers*

*When approaching this subject from the Scriptures, many honest and sincere questions arise. This site is designed to be an interactive forum bringing members of the Body of Christ together in fellowship and study around the subject of Universal Reconciliation. We start with an initial list of 322 questions. These questions are taken from the New Testament, beginning in Matthew and working through Revelation.*

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cribed to the credit of humanity – not with any of this does God shine in our hearts, but solely with a view to the *illumination of the knowledge of the glory of Himself* in the face of Him Who was crucified.

Notice how the three terms are combined in this wonderful passage. It is not a loose association of three ideas coupled together by the word “and,” but a superimposing of one term on another, and yet on a third (through the repeated usage of the word “of”) to give a glorious composite phrase worthy of Him to Whom our thoughts are being directed.

*The illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (II Corinthians 4:6).

A little boy was once looking in a shop window when he saw a beautiful portrait. He was fascinated by it. It was a painting of the face of Jesus by Harold Coping. Now we are not pretending that this was a true likeness – it was just a man’s impression of the face of Jesus – but Dr. Boreham, in that essay referred to earlier, vouches for it being a true story. The boy’s mother came up and tried to drag him away, but he held her back and asked, “Who’s that?” The woman answered, as she moved away, “It’s a portrait of God, that’s all.”

“A portrait of God.” Now if that had been a true likeness of the face of Jesus, it would, indeed, have been a portrait of God, for the only way that we can see the face of God is in the face of His Son. “*God no one has ever seen,*” wrote John;

*The only-begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds Him* (John 1:18).

Jesus told Philip,

*He who has seen Me has seen the Father* (John 14:9).

If we wish to recognize one another, we do it in the face. It would be most difficult for us to recognize each other by the hands alone or by our feet – though they are all different, as the study of fingerprints indicates – but when we see the face of a person we know, recognition is generally instantaneous. Yet the

face is also a fairly reliable indication of the character behind it. According as to whether it is habitually smiling or frowning, gentle or forbidding, carefree or worried, so we judge the nature of its owner. So, in this passage in II Corinthians 4, the word “face” is used figuratively. It is not the literal face of Jesus Christ, as He hung on that cross, racked with pain and enshrouded in darkness, but rather the character, the personality of Him Whose face it was. Where can we find a truer insight into the knowledge of the glory of God than in the contemplation of Him, Whose delight it was, and is, and ever will be, to glorify the God Whose true Image He is?

Moses, you remember, expressed a desire to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:18), but was told that he could not see His Face. Nevertheless, while Moses was hidden in a cleft in the rock, the Lord passed by, and he was permitted to see the back of the Lord *as He was moving away* (:20-23); and this is what the Lord proclaimed as He passed by,

*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation* (Exodus 34:6-7).

This was the picture of God that Moses saw – a God Who had said previously that He would not justify the wicked (Exodus 23:7). It was the picture of a *receding* God – a God going farther and farther away so long as humanity’s sins, ever increasing, stood between them and Him. It indicated the inevitable outcome of a dispensation which was based on law, however righteous that law in itself might be. Paul says,

*By works of law no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight, for through law is the recognition of sin* (Romans 3:20).

*The law, indeed, is holy, and the precept holy and just and good* (7:12).

The fault lay not in the law, but in humanity.

Yet now Paul points us to an *approaching* God, for His Face we can now see in the face of His beloved Son, Who at Calvary, swept away, once and for all, that barrier of sin which stood in the way of face-to-face recognition. So we now find a God Who can, and does justify the irreverent (Romans 4:5), and Who *comes forward*, holding out a welcoming hand, and says, “*Be conciliated to Me!*” (cf. II Corinthians 5:18-21). The *approaching* God shows the power of an evangel which has *grace* for its sole determining factor; where works are not allowed to impinge on its outcome; where every provision is made by God, and man’s aid is not required.

There is an old saying that “God helps those who help themselves.” If ever there was any truth in such a statement, it is certainly not part of the truth for today. The truth for today is, “God helps those who cannot help themselves.” Let no one think that he goes to heaven because he has been good. This is common teaching, but it is wrong. The only reason why any of us are promised a celestial allotment is because we were once sinners, so that God can use us to display to the rest of the universe the *grace* which He has exercised in bringing us to glory.

“*For in grace, through faith, are you saved,*” says Paul, in Ephesians 2, where he speaks of this display among the celestials:

*For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God’s approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievement are we (:7-10).*

If any of us could boast of what we had contributed towards our own salvation, it would spoil the whole picture. It would no longer be entirely of grace, but of works. It would no longer be God’s achievement, but partly ours. It is just because the evangel of the cross is God’s power for salvation that Paul is able to say,

*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).*

What greater power in the universe is there than the love of God, which not only can forge a bond so strong that nothing in heaven nor on earth can ever break it, but will ultimately succeed in reconciling even the most intractable elements to Himself, that He may be “*All in all*” (I Corinthians 15:28)?

## THE MIGHT OF HIS STRENGTH

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was the release of God’s people from outside oppression; the deliverance accomplished at Calvary was the liberating of all humanity from the oppression of sin within themselves. The third great deliverance brought to our notice by Paul is that of the Lord Jesus from the dead. This stupendous act completely vindicates God in all of His doings, demonstrates His absolute supremacy over every force in the universe, and ensures the successful culmination of His purpose.

In Ephesians 1:20, Paul, after having spoken of the transcendent greatness of God’s power for us who are believing, tells us that it is,

*In accord with the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead.*

We pause here for a moment. Rousing Christ from among the dead! After the crucifixion, Christ did not remain in the tomb forever. On the third day, He was roused from among the dead. Was this a special demonstration of God’s power? If so, in what way? Jesus Himself had done that several times in the restoring of life to a dead person.

There is something more in the rousing of Christ from among the dead than there was in, say, the awaking of Lazarus. Lazarus died again, but we are informed that Christ dies no longer; He died to Sin once for all time (Romans 6:9-10). Furthermore, the rousing of Christ from the dead means the awakening of everyone else who has ever passed into death, and not only the awakening, but the ultimate vivification. All, like Christ, must be placed ultimately beyond the power of death.

*For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, ►*



*in Christ, shall all be vivified* (I Corinthians 15:22).

The rousing of Christ from the dead leads to all of the consequences mentioned in I Corinthians 15:20-28, verses which are so familiar to us, which end with death itself being abolished and God being All in all. The rousing of Christ gives God’s purpose an impetus which is not expended until the whole is brought to its final consummation. The rousing of Christ means the deliverance of the whole human race from the bondage of the tomb. This is implied in the term,

*Firstborn from among the dead* (Colossians 1:18).

If the term “*Firstborn of every creature*” (Colossians 1:15) covers all who have ever come into being, then the term “*Firstborn from among the dead*” includes all who have ever passed into death. If the powers that have brought forth the universe were placed in Christ at the beginning, then all of the powers necessary to bring forth the dead were placed in Him when He became Firstborn from among the dead.

This is, indeed, a tremendous manifestation of God’s strength, but we think there is still more to add to this matter. We remember that a guard of Roman soldiers was placed around the tomb of the Lord in order to prevent the body from being removed, but the guard quaked at the appearance of the messenger of the Lord. The men were powerless in the presence of Divine power.

We would suggest that the human guard, which Pilate provided, would be puny in the extreme, in comparison with the guard which Satan would set over that tomb. Knowing, as he would know, that God’s whole purpose demanded the resurrection of Christ – that it would utterly fail if Christ were not raised – and knowing, too, that Jesus had foretold His own resurrection within three days, can we imagine for a moment that Satan would not assemble every force he could muster to prevent God’s power from being exercised? Would the Adversary cease to be an Adversary at this point and, having apparently succeeded in destroying God’s Son, stand aside and tamely watch while God roused Him from among the dead?

Experience and history both show that Satan opposes God at every point, and the forces of opposition concentrated around that tomb must have been almost overwhelming.

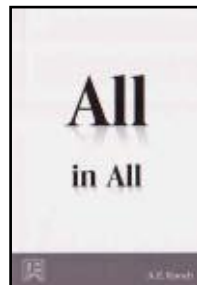
God not only roused Jesus from among the dead, but exalted Him above *every* power that might raise itself in opposition. Here is displayed the *real* might of God’s strength, in that He rouses Christ from among the dead, and seats Him,

*At His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One Who is completing the all in all* (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Or, as it is written in Philippians,

*Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:9-11).

Or, as it is written in Colossians,



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He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, **that in all He may be becoming first**, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens (Colossians 1:18-20).

In the light of the later revelation of the prison letters of Paul, the passage in I Corinthians 15:20-28 takes on a new grandeur. For it shows us that the impetus given to God's purpose by the rousing of Christ from among the dead does not expend itself until all others are vivified in Him; until all sovereignty and authority and power are brought to naught; until all enemies are placed under Christ's feet; until the last enemy, death itself, is abolished; until all in the universe is made subject to God's Son; until the Son Himself has handed over all sovereign power to the Father, and God has become All in all. What an impetus! The rousing of Christ from among the dead sets in motion a chain of happenings which carry on and on and do not stop, until God's purpose is fully consummated.

What a demonstration of power! The might of God's strength, which operated in Christ, rousing Him from among the dead, was sufficient to exalt Him to the highest pinnacle in the universe, thus ensuring that all of His enemies would be made subject to Him – that every opposing power would be made subordinate to Him – and that God's purpose would be fulfilled in Him in all of its grandeur.

The evangel of the glory of Christ! May it irradiate our hearts that they may, indeed, be illuminated with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of His Son.

We cannot leave this subject without noting that *the same might of God's strength*, which is operating in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead, *may even now be exercised on our behalf*, for Paul prays (and so should we) that God might be giving us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of our hearts having been enlightened, for us to perceive,

What is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and **what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing**, in accord with the might of His strength (Ephesians 1:17-19).

Again, in Romans 8:11, the apostle writes,

*Now if the Spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies because of His Spirit making its home in you.*

God's Spirit operated in Christ when it roused Him from among the dead, and raised Him to the highest pinnacle in the universe. So tremendous was the power – it was *the might of God's strength!* – and what is the nature of the power that is now operating in us? It is *in accord* with that same *might of God's strength*. Let us conclude our study of *the power of God* with Paul's estimation of that power as it operates in the members of the ecclesia today (Ephesians 3:20-21), and let us never cease praying accordingly (Colossians 1:9-11).

*Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, according to the power that is operating in us, to Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen! ■*

## SALVATION

As with the slaves during the American Civil War, who heard and believed the news of their emancipation, we do not make the gospel of our salvation true by believing it. When we believe, we only enter into a realization and appreciation of what is already true.

— James Coram  
*His Achievement Are We*





I have just finished reading, [The King James Version, 400 years of Bondage](#). Quite an eye opener to say the least!!! Very good, thanks. – **NM**

I wanted to say thanks for everything. The [BSN](#) has been a real blessing. You have been an amazing blessing in our lives. – **AZ**

Once again I am giving Father thanks for the strange work He does with you. If it were not for your years of diligent readings from various authors, could you have found the careful answer you gave us today? Father certainly blesses us through your sacrifices; for those who have an ear to hear. – **LA**

I wanted to let you know I have been really enjoying and learning from your writings. Please keep up the faith and continue on with our Lord's strength and work. As a humorous note: I was at the local barber shop waiting to get a haircut and the men were talking about all manner of things in particular crimes. Then one man spoke out loudly and said we need to bring back the death penalty in this country. I don't know why, but I just started laughing, and they wanted to know why. So I said to them, "Gentlemen we have all been under a death sentence since Adam's sin," and told them of I Corinthians 15:20-26. They looked at me like I was a nut, but that is alright; it didn't bother me. – **IL**

Thanks for all the wonderful ministering throughout the year. Keep 'em flying! – **WI**

Thanks to all of you for shining a light on the truth concerning the ways of God. – **Canada**

Just a short note to tell you how much I appreciate all the work you and your staff of volunteers are doing.

You are touching people all over the world with this truth of Father's love for all. You bring out (from the

Scriptures) that we are all family, one with the Father. When one of the family members hurts, we all hurt, when one is rejoicing, we all rejoice (Romans 12:15).

I have heard many in the religious system say the same of each other, but when it comes time to rejoice for the fortunes of one of their own, jealousy creeps in; when it comes time to mourn, they can't receive it as from the Lord. It is as if the one who is mourning (because of a trial in their life) is actually forsaken of God, so in turn they forsake them. Not all do this, but I believe the majority do. They can't accept a God who would bring one of His children into a trial. They can't see the hand of God in any evil we might be called on to endure. When this happens they believe it happens because you are out of fellowship with God. Nonsense.

You, on the other hand, point out the truth (from the Scriptures) that God will do, and does, whatever is necessary to draw His children to a deeper and clearer understanding of Who Father is, and what His love is really about, conforming us into His image.

I just finished reading [The Purpose of the Law](#) in [BSN #380](#). So beautifully explained. My, how awesome to see things more clearly than before. I thank Father that there are those like you out there who can put down so plainly, as night and day, the difference between law and grace ... law and faith ... law and righteousness. Wow, thanks. – **NM**

Looking forward to visiting you soon. My family and I have enjoyed your writings and I am thankful to the Father for your life. – **NV**

I wish to thank you for your excellent [The King James Version, 400 years of Bondage](#). I ordered it last week, and when it came yesterday I read it through right away. – **NC**

The church always presents death as our friend, ushering us into the next life. The older I get, the more I realize that without the resurrection made possible by Him, death would insure us all of never having any hope of anything but nothingness. – **OK**



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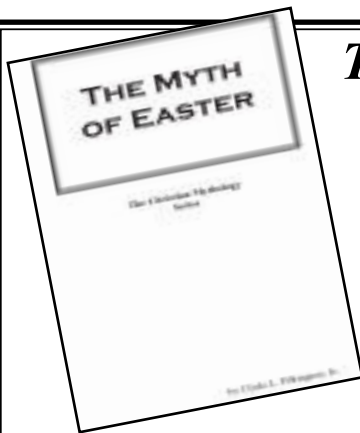


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## *The Myth of Easter*

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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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If Easter is the celebration of the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, then why does its date change every year? Historical dates do not fluctuate; but Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. Have you ever wondered why?

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It is one of the glaring clues that something is seriously wrong with Christendom. The Western Christian religion can't seem to get anything right when it comes to even the simplest of Scriptural truths.

Have you ever really considered if there is any scriptural basis of Good Friday or Easter Sunrise Services that are so commonly observed by the religious community? Additionally, have you ever considered what Easter Rabbits and Easter Eggs have to do with the resurrection of Christ or teachings of God's Word?

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