



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XIX  
Issue 456

# Sufficient Deficiency, Competent Incompetency

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope (Romans 8:20, KJV).*

*For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation (CV).*

### SUFFICIENT DEFICIENCY

Do you keenly sense, even at your very best, that something is missing? That something is desperately lacking? That something is “off”? That something isn’t quite right.

According to Romans 8:20, Father has *subjected you to vanity*, making you unfulfilled, unsatisfied, disappointed, disheartened, discouraged, frustrated, irritated, empty and hollow. Are you aware of this state of subjection?

Let’s look at the definition of our English word “vanity.” Read the definition *really* slowly, and as you do, ask yourself, “Does this definition sound a little too familiar?” “Do these words seem a little like my own life?”

emptiness; lack of substance to satisfy desire ... fruitless desire or endeavor; trifling labor that produces no good ... empty pleasure; vain pursuit; idle show; unsubstantial enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

The Greek word ματαιότης<sup>2</sup> translated “vanity” is defined as,

1. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Dictionary*, 1828.  
2. *Mataiotēs*.



emptiness;<sup>3</sup>

seeking without finding.<sup>4</sup>

Do these words also resonate somewhere deep within you? Have you long sought for something which would make everything settled and right? Has the complete contentment for which you have always sought seemingly lurked just outside of your reach?

“If I just had ...”

“If I could just ...”

“If I was just ...”

“... things would be different and I would be complete.”

(see *SUFFICIENT*, page 4051)

3. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*.  
4. B.W. Johnson, *People's New Testament*.

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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).

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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**SUFFICIENT** (continued from front page)

To contemplate more thoroughly what God has truly subjected us to, thoughtfully consider the way “*vanity*” in Romans 8:20 is translated in the follow versions:

- aimless frustration* (An Understandable Version);
- spoil* (Bible in Worldwide English);
- imperfection* (Montgomery New Testament);
- folly* (The Riverside New Testament);
- failure and unreality* (Weymouth New Testament);
- futility* (Moffatt New Testament);
- weakness* (New Life Study Testament);
- limitation* (Phillips New Testament);
- dissolution* [i.e., putrefaction] (Original New Testament).

Not that you would want to identify with any of these words, but don’t each of them echo in some empty recess of your heart? Plainly, we were created *deficient in ourselves* so that we would need to find our *sufficiency outside of ourselves*. Yet, we look in the wrong places when we ultimately seek our sufficiency anywhere other than in God.

Paul, in light of the ministry committed to him, was acutely aware of his own deficiency:

*Who is sufficient for these things? ... Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God* (II Corinthians 2:16; 3:5).

Our constant unsettled state and insatiable inner longings, our nagging lack of complete fulfillment, are but gentle, and sometimes not so gentle, reminders of our need of *Him*.

We’re *all* broken – *every last one of us* – all of the time. It’s God’s design for our earthly lives. He keeps us ever deficient so that *He* may teach us our supreme sufficiency in *Him*. This is a keystone truth, a lifelong lesson: *He alone* is our sufficiency.

**COMPETENT INCOMPETENCY**

Is your own incompetence any less obvious than your insufficiency? Even at your best you fall end-

lessly short. The truths of Romans 8:20 also speak of our being subjected to incompetency, ineptness, weakness, feebleness and failing.

The Greek word for “*vanity*” is also defined as:

- inutility;<sup>5</sup>
- frailty, lack of vigor.<sup>6</sup>

The *Concordant Version* translates II Corinthians 2:16 and 3:5 using the word “*competent*” as antithetical to “*vanity*.”

*And for this who is **competent**? ... Not that we are **competent** of ourselves, to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our **competency** is of God.*

As with our deficiency, our weakness and failures are likewise reminders of our need of God. Father keeps us ever *incompetent* so He may teach us His supreme *competency*. This too is a foundational truth, one that takes a lifetime to learn. He alone is our competency.

**NOT WILLINGLY,  
NOT VOLUNTARILY**

Remember these words the next time you struggle with dissatisfaction and inability:

- not willingly* (Romans 8:20),
- not voluntarily* (CV, Dabhar),
- not by choice* (Rotherham).

Your incompetency and your deficiency are not your fault. You didn’t sign up for it. You didn’t ask for them. They are simply part of God’s current design for you – all for your greater good. One day, after our terrestrial education has passed and our vivification<sup>7</sup> is effected, all of this vanity will be gloriously corrected. For now, it’s in our incompetency that we find competency, and it’s in our deficiency that we find sufficiency – because in the end it is all about Him.

Well did Paul learn from God,

*“My grace is **sufficient** for you: for My strength is made perfect in your weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me* (II Corinthians 12:9). ■

5. James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustible Concordance*.  
 6. Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.  
 7. I.e., resurrection beyond the reach of death: immortality.

# Satan's Sphere of Activity Today: False Teachers

by — Phillip R. Garrison

**H**ow do false teachers operate today? Much the same way as they did in Jeremiah's day.



The 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian, E.W. Bullinger, commented on this stating,

*For thus said Jehovah of Hosts, God of Israel, "Let not your prophets who are in your midst, and your diviners, lift you up, nor hearken ye unto their dreams, that ye are causing them to dream; for with falsehood they are prophesying to you in My name; I have not sent them, an affirmation of Jehovah" (Jeremiah 29:8-9).*

... It bids us to look at Satan's sphere of influence today, not in the police courts, *but in the pulpits*; not in the newspapers, *but in sermons*; not on the stage, *but in our universities*; not in our streets, *but in the professor's chairs at our theological colleges.*<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle Paul warned about this in II Corinthians.

*For those such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ, and no wonder – for even the Adversary doth transform himself into a messenger of light; no great thing, then, if also his ministrants do transform themselves as ministrants of righteousness – whose end shall be according to their works (II Corinthians 11:13-15).*

It takes discernment and studying the rightly divided and correctly translated Scriptures to pick out most of today's false teachers. Why? Because they aren't teaching *seemingly* evil things. They teach *seemingly righteous* things. They have a bright smile, a Bible in hand, they have hundreds, thousands, millions of followers, they claim the name of Jesus (see II Corinthians 11:13-15 above).

False teachers do not (by and large) fool very many people by claiming to be sent by Satan. That is a bit obvious. Instead, they claim the God and the Christ of the Scriptures. Some do not even know they are deceiving, which of course, adds to the depth of the deception. Many have some truth in what they say. This is the tactic Satan uses today.

When Jeremiah prophesied to Israel (Jeremiah 28) that Babylon would take them into captivity, they would not listen to the Words of God through Jeremiah. Instead, they listened to Hananiah who claimed that God would not bring this upon them, that God was going to bring blessing on them, that they were God's people and that He would prosper them, and that they just needed faith. Sound familiar?

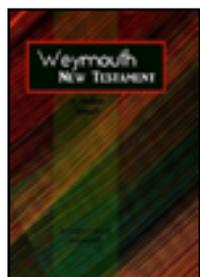
Yet God did not authorize Hananiah, and He does *not* authorize those today. Some teach that you can speak things into existence, some teach things that are akin to Paganism, some will say that God spoke to them and revealed things to them not found in Scripture, some claim to have visions sent by God, and most teach that Christ's work on the cross was necessary *but not enough*.

Speaking of these, Paul says that they are,

*... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (II Timothy 3:5).* ■

1. E.W. Bullinger, *How to Enjoy the Bible*, ch. 2.5.

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## My Story

*“We also believe, and therefore speak.”*

Testimonies of Believers #8

**Peter Woodhouse**

# My Journey to Freedom

Dear Clyde,

I have been trying for some time to write to you and let you know something of my story and how much of a blessing your ministry has been to me.

Twenty seven years ago, I became a believer and part of a Pentecostal fellowship. After twelve years of frantic service, the church closed its doors when the Pastor was too discouraged to carry on. Since that time my wife and I have attended other Pentecostal fellowships. In the last few years, however, the Grace of God has taken me on a journey of discovery that I did not expect, or ever would have imagined.

I had always wondered about many apparent contradictions I read in Scripture and how grace and law always seemed to be mixed together. I even heard a preacher claim that some people think that it is all grace, but that we need to have the right balance of grace in our lives. Statements like this tend to throw us back to dependence on the flesh and the law, and in themselves lead to a false balance based on law.

My journey to freedom began when I was browsing in a Christian bookshop and discovered a book by E.W. Bullinger entitled *Number in Scripture*. Having a scientific bent I was drawn to this book, and upon

reading it I was astounded at the spiritual insights therein. This led me to seek out other books by the same author. Returning to the bookshop I discovered a copy of his *Commentary on Revelation*, which I promptly purchased. Every time I have returned to the bookshop I have checked to see if there were any copies of this commentary on the shelf, only to find none. It's almost as if the Father kept that book on the shelf for me to find on that particular day. Anyway, upon reading this commentary I began to see the Bible in a totally different light. Scripture began to make a whole lot more sense than ever before.

Having my hunger awakened for further truth, I began to seek on the internet for further writings by the same author and began to find wonderful dispensational truths and understandings concerning the Body of Christ that I had never known before. This all led me to the Study Shelf website where I found many of E.W. Bullinger's books. This brought me in touch with the idea of the salvation of all which I initially rejected as false doctrine, ripping up the first booklet I received.

Upon reading a copy of *The Mystery of the Gospel* by A.E. Knoch, however, I began to consider the issue more seriously, and have come to believe it as the truth. Thanks to the many publications you have ►



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made available, and your own and Martin Zender's writings, I have come to understand many wonderful truths that can be verified in Scripture.

To cut a long story short, I am now enjoying a wonderful freedom in the Father's love that I never knew before. This has all come at a difficult time in my life, because I am a full-time caregiver for my wife who is severely disabled from many years of degeneration due to rheumatoid arthritis. This involves assisting her during the night, resulting in interrupted sleep. As a result I am awake for several hours in the middle of the night and I find this a wonderful time to read and look up Scripture etc. Through the resources of your ministry the Father has turned a difficult time into a time of blessing also; He indeed has provided the sequel which sustains.

My wife still attends a Pentecostal church, and since I am her caregiver I take her. As for myself I have withdrawn from involvement in the church and now see Pentecostalism as it really is: a re-entry to law through the back door and an infiltration of paganism. My wife does not see as I see and will not be persuaded to question, so I simply have released it to the Father Who works all according to the counsel of His own will. My daughter is open to the truth and has embraced many of the truths I have been able to teach her. ■

Love,

Peter Woodhouse  
Australia



I have ordered several books off of [studyshef.com](http://studyshef.com) and they have helped me a lot. – **OH**

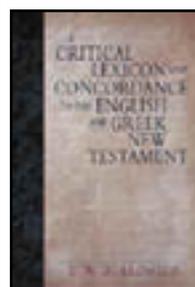
We love you all in Him Who is our all and our God and Father Who will be *All in all!* – **WA**

I want to thank you so much for publishing the [Bible Students' Notebook](#). You had recent articles on the [Unpardonable Sin](#) and Matthew 10:28. After hearing many, many teachings on these subjects and doing hours of research myself, I still never really had a firm grasp of understanding on their meanings. Thanks to your publication I now do. I have been a devout Bible student for the last 7 years and I still delight when I learn something new. Thanks so much for your wonderful work of spreading truth. – **GA**

My friend and I use the [Bible Student's Notebook](#) as study topics. Keep up the good work Clyde, and God be with you and your family. – **Australia**

Thank you for your labors. I know how hard it is. – **FL**

I just wanted you to know that you are greatly appreciated by me! I just discovered [actually Yahweh/God caused it] you this week. I'm pleased to have such a brother as you. It's only been in the last 15 years [of my 70] that I've been shown who is in control. It's changed my life. It's encouraging to me to know that there are wonderful folks like you out there sharing the truth. I love you, my brother, and I look forward to the time in the future when I will have the honor/privilege of meeting you! – **Email** ■



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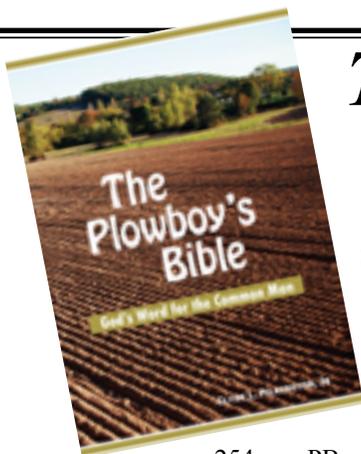


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