



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume XIII  
Issue 301

## *You're Having Marital Problems?* *Thinking of Divorce?*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Life is hard, at best. It is designed so by the Lord to teach us so many things about ourselves and about Him. This life is only the first stage of our existence, and it is here – in this life – that He is preparing us for the grand joys of what He has in store for us. This life is all about contrasts – contrasts that will make the resurrection-life all that more precious and appreciated. One can't truly appreciate, enjoy and be thankful for health unless they have been sick – really sick. One can't really appreciate food without the contrast of hunger, sunshine without the contrast of rain, etc. *This* life is all about these contrasts. God has made us subject to the vanity (emptiness, purposelessness) of this life so that He might also subject us to the hope of resurrection-life (Romans 8:20).



fence. Hollywood gives us a fantasy, and so often do those around us who are influenced by it. As a result of the failure of couples even to understand the commitment, dedication and hard work that marriage takes, there are really very few good marriages. Very few! I know, because I have people confide in me regularly – husbands and wives both. These conversations have taken place for most of my adult life.

At first, many years ago, I was surprised to hear from people – especially believers whom I knew and even highly respected. I was even shocked to hear from those who seemed to have the “ideal,” “model” marriages confide in me. They displayed this *image* of great happiness and success in their marriages, when in fact they struggled greatly.

It did not take me very long to realize that there are no fairytale marriages! NONE! Never have been, never will be. No matter what you may *think* you see in others, or what you may hear them “say” in portraying their relationship to others, marriages are an EXTREMELY hard work of commitment – extremely.

There are countless couples to whom I have been very close over the years – many of which I thought had amazingly naturally good marriages – who are now divorced. Why? Because there are no *naturally* good mar-

(see **DIVORCE**, page 2760)

Our only true, lasting joy and happiness in this life will be found in Him. As we look to Him for our joy and happiness, He will allow us to find Him in everything around us – in our hurts, trials, pains and seeming incompleteness – even in the struggles of our marriages. If you are having marital problems, my encouragement to you is to look to Him. He alone is the ultimate answer to all of your disappointments, all of your unfulfilledness, all of your longings.

On the practical side I will speak very frankly of some of the obvious things first. Not only is life hard, but relationships are not easy, at best – and the marriage relationship in particular. The relationship of marriage is ultimately not about some “feeling” but is in fact a commitment of the highest family level which takes a LOT of work. Marriage is the hardest work of life.

The grass is always greener on the other side of the

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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 (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total 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; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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## Dear Readers.

### THIS ISSUE

In *Bible Student's Notebook* #240 we ran an article on divorce, *When the Vow Breaks*. This article was written primarily for those who are divorced, or those finding themselves in the middle of one.

We believe that the truths presented in this earlier study are very important. Many face the heartbreak and devastation of divorce. Grace and an accurate understanding of Scripture are crucial during this time of severe trial. We have heard from those who have been greatly helped by this study.

In this current issue of the *BSN* we are offering a balance to that article designed to give those who are contemplating divorce some things to ponder seriously. We trust that this will provide appropriate help for those who are at such a stage in their marriage.

### RETURNING TO OUR ROOTS

With the *Bible Student's Notebook* now primarily being a *free* electronic weekly, we have returned to our roots. The *BSN* began in 1989 as a free print publication. In the first few years it reached a circulation of over 3,000, and we were forced in 1994 to move it to a subscription periodical to help cover the mounting cost of printing and postage. With the electronic version we eliminate such costs, thus allowing us to bring this periodical back to its beginnings.

Now you can help us grow the *BSN* circulation once again. Please feel free to pass on issues to others who might enjoy them. Free electronic subscriptions can be received by signing up at:

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### MY MOTHER

My 83-year-old mother, who lives with us, has been re-diagnosed with cancer. After spending a few days in the hospital for testing she has been back home with us for a few weeks.

We do not know how long we will have her with us, but she will remain at home with us for her care. She has been enrolled in Hospice for help in providing

assistance with her pain relief, addressing her symptoms so that she can be as comfortable as possible. They currently have her on a pain patch that keeps steady medication supplied, supported by oral medicine to help with breakthrough pain. They have also supplied her with oxygen for her occasional shortness of breath.

We are so thankful that she can continue to be with us, and that we can care for her. This is our honored privilege. At this time she is fairly comfortable and enjoying a steady flow of loved ones traveling to see her. During the past five weeks we have had 95 overnight stays of family and friends. This has meant a lot to her.

Obviously, with establishing her proper care, and with the family and friends in our home, we have fallen behind on much of our regular work and schedule. We are now working on re-establishing some kind of routine around here with our new circumstances.

Mother has always been a real people-person. Her faithful ministry for the past few years has been involved in spending hours a day encouraging others by phone. She truly loves people, and loves to have them in her life. I am sure that she would love to hear from any of you who would like to send her a card. For those who do, it can be sent to:

Christine Pilkington  
412 Bedford St  
Windber, PA 15963

I have such a bond with so many of you, who have come to be my dear friends and extended family. It is my true joy that Father has given me this opportunity to serve each of you. Thank you so much for being a part of my life, and for your love, patience, understanding and prayers during this time. It means a lot to me.

Your brother,



Clyde

DIVORCE (continued from front page)

riages. If the hard work of marriage is not done *every* day, marriages can just simply slip away. This is because the commitment to the work that it requires is not present.

The exaggerated myth of “romance” propagated by the novel and movie industry is greatly to blame in our day. One will surely *not* read of “romance” as the foundation of marriage in the Scriptures. Instead, marriage is about personal commitment to another. After all, the bottom line is that love is *not* an emotion, but an unconditional commitment and action to another's good – “*I love you no matter what.*” “*I will always love you, no matter what.*” “*You can always count on me, no matter what.*” “*I will always be here for you, no matter what.*” “*Your heart can always safely rest with me, no matter what.*” No matter what!

I am telling you this because I do not want your source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness to be founded on a myth. I will tell you this because after many years of experience I do not know *one* couple (dead or alive) that I would want as the model of marriage for me. Not one!

What you think you “see” in others is rarely the truth. This is why so many are “shocked” when divorces do take place: “*Wow, I didn't see that one coming.*” Early in my life I determined that I would look to the Lord *alone* as my pattern, as my strength, as my satisfaction – in my person, and in my marriage.

I will share more specific scriptural truth with you in a bit; but bear with me as I continue on the obviously practical side.

If you were to split, what guarantee do you have that you will find any lasting satisfaction in whatever it is that you think that you are seeking?

### **CHILDREN**

Do you have children? If you were to split, what would you do with them? Would you like your spouse to have them? Would you like to take them away from your spouse, and you keep them? Would you like to split up the children, you keep one or more, and your spouse keep one or the rest? Which one(s) would you like to keep? Would you like to just pass them back and forth; maybe you could have them for two weeks, and then your spouse could have them for two weeks? Does that sound good to you? would this be the end result of your *dissatisfaction*?

Then, if you could find someone with whom to share your life again (which is no guarantee), how would they treat your children? Listen to me: *no one* will love your children like you and your spouse – no one, no matter how good they are; it will just never, *ever* be the same.

Speaking of your children, how much do you love them? Do your thoughts have their best welfare in mind? What is best for them? Divorce is an extremely shattering emotional wound to overcome in childhood that affects a person – and every relationship that they have – for the rest of their lives. I hear from adults regularly who bear their scars produced by their parent's divorce. It can have a devastating and lifelong effect.

### **REGRET**

So, you say you don't want to wake up one morning years from now and regret having stayed in your marriage? If you were to leave your spouse, what guarantee do you have that you will not wake up one morning and regret having left the life that you used to have – a life that you can never get back? *Never*. The reason that I ask is that, from 30 years of hearing stories, I know of many who would give anything to undo their leaving.

### **SPIRITUAL ISSUES**

O.k. – now on to some more spiritual truth.

Is marriage about some “feeling?” What does God think about it? A lot of the marriages in biblical times were arranged. Did that make them somehow less of a marriage?

There may be a “spark” that draws some couples together; but a “spark” cannot keep anyone together. However a marriage begins, there is *only one thing* that will make it work, and that is the heart attitude of commitment. Real love is something that you grow into in marriage. Your spouse – day by day, week by week, year by year – becomes your best friend and closest family member, which far surpasses any initial “spark.” At the core, marriage is about FAMILY! Solomon first calls his wife his “*sister*” repeatedly in the Song of Solomon: “*my sister, my spouse.*” Note the order: “*sister*” first, then “*wife.*” Forget Hollywood: *THIS* is the divine view of marriage.



## TO THE WIFE

Do you “love” your spouse in the right “feeling,” “chemistry” kind of way (whatever elusive thing this type of “love” is “supposed” to be)? What does God think about this? By the way, if you are the wife, did you realize that He never commands you to love your husband? However, if you are the husband, He *does* command you to love your wife! *This* is the way God planned marriage to be: *not* wives inherently loving their husbands, but *husbands loving their wives*. This is the way it is with God and us. We do not inherently love God, but He loves us. Our “love” of Him is just a response of His love and care of us. *This* is the design of God. Husbands are to love their wives. Wives are to *be loved* by their husbands. If you are a wife, the issue is not whether or not you are “in love.” Instead, God has designed that you *be loved*! Spiritually, the only question you need to have in your marriage is, “Are you loved?”

Don’t look for the myth of romance – of “falling in love” or “being in love” – but for the reality of *being loved*.

The *only* thing that God ever says about a woman loving her husband is found in Titus 2:4.

*That they [the older women] may **teach** the young women ... to love their husbands.*

Note that there is no command for a wife to love her husband here (as there is with the husband toward the wife). God says here that loving your husband is not something that comes naturally. It is not inherent in you. Regardless of what the novels and movies project, love is not about something that you “fall in” or “are in,” but for the wife is something that must be taught and learned. Love for your husband is something that you must learn as a response to His love for you, just like our relationship with God.

*We love Him, **because** He first loved us* (I John 4:19).

As for what God wants from you as a wife, you should give yourself to His Word to find out. One thing, though, is clearly His will:

*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, “**Let not the wife depart from her husband**”* (I Corinthians 7:10).

## TO THE HUSBAND

Regardless of your wife’s current response to you, God has called you to be Christ to her.

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it* (Ephesians 5:25).

Think of your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is rooted entirely in Him. He is the Lover, you are the loved. He is the Wooer, you are the wooed. He is the constant, dependable One in your relationship. How often have you been cold and aloof to Him? How often have you neglected and ignored Him? Yet there He is – *always* exactly the same. His love for you has never been cold or distant.

This is the love that you have been called to manifest towards your wife; you are to be her rock, her fortress, her dependable one. This is not your love, but His love through you to her. Always. No matter what. This is your calling.

When you are tempted to complain about your wife, and to cast fault, failure and blame upon her for your own feelings, choices and behavior, remember that she is called to the role of the “church” (*ecclesia*) toward you, and you are called to the role of “Christ” toward her. She is the failing one – that is her calling; and you are the faithful one – that is your calling. To walk in such a high, divine calling, there is no legitimate place in your heart for bitterness, anger and resentment toward your wife any more than Christ has ever had any of these toward you. Be the husband God has called you to be; she needs this from you. In the process you will learn more about God and His relationship with you than any religious training could ever teach you.

## TRUE AND LASTING HAPPINESS

Your true and lasting happiness will be found *only in Him*. No matter where else you look, you will find the satisfaction that you seek in life *only* from the Lord. You won’t find it *anywhere* else. If there is a lack in your life – regardless of your circumstances – look to Him to fill it. When you find your happiness in Him, life will come alive with meaning and purpose, in spite of hardness and shortcomings.

# Testimony Revealed

## in Its Own Time

by – Donald Fielding

God's glory, and His place in our hearts, depends upon the concept we have of Him, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our standards of right and wrong may be faulty, but we cannot help judging the Deity by them. If we *think* He is right, we honor Him. Our ideas of might may be mean; nevertheless, we must measure Him with them. If we imagine that He lacks sufficient might to master His creatures, our estimation of Him descends. If we believe that He works all according to His will, we cannot but admire Him. Our concepts of wisdom may be crude, but we are forced to estimate the Deity by them. If there are problems beyond His powers, He is demeaned in our mind; but if we are convinced that He can cope successfully with any situation, we cannot but delight in Him. Our love is a feeble flicker, yet we must compare His with it. However much we seek to avoid it, if He does that which our love would not allow, we become cold to Him; but if our hearts are enlightened to see how far His love surpasses ours, and that naught that He does is condemned by our hearts, we are compelled to adore Him. — A.E. Knoch<sup>1</sup>

### THE DIVINE OMISSION

We rejoice in Christ Jesus as the Effulgence<sup>2</sup> of God's glory, and we gladly acknowledge such precious perception being granted, solely through the wise and gentle revelation of the spirit of truth, to those whom He designates and calls.

Being about to leave His beloved disciples, our Lord declared,

*Still much have I to say to you, but you are not able to bear it at present. Yet whenever that may be coming the spirit of truth it will be guiding you into all the truth, for it will not be speaking from itself, but whatsoever it should be hearing will it be speaking, and of what is coming will it be inform-*

*ing you. All, whatever the Father has, is Mine. Therefore I said to you that of Mine is it getting, and will be informing you* (John 16:12-15, CLV).

They were distressed and puzzled. His words, foretelling His shameful death and their consolation, confused them. Yet through the medium of their subsequent ministry, their evangel<sup>3</sup> was to reach out to Israel and was also to form an essential contrast to the grace of God's purpose which would be heralded by the apostle Paul. Yet they had not the slightest concept of the evangel which was entrusted to Paul as the apostle to the nations. This evangel, in its startling breadth and length and depth and height, is nothing less than the complete reconciliation of all, through Christ to our God and Father! Later in his ministry, Peter wrote that he found Paul's words, "... *hard to apprehend*"<sup>4</sup> (II Peter 3:14-16). Evidently, as indicated when the apostles asked, "*Lord art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6), neither our Lord nor the spirit of truth enlightened them with this aspect of God's universal purpose. Why then, this omission?

### FIRST THE TERRESTRIAL

We seek for answers with flawed, subjective reason; but since Paul completes the Word of God, there is no need now for confusion or speculation. Our Father's loving purpose has been scrupulously recorded for the satisfaction of each earnest inquiry.

Answering Nicodemus, a representative of Israel's ruling class, Jesus observed,

*If I told you of the terrestrial and you are not believing, how shall you be believing if I should be telling you of the celestial?* (John 3:12).

Jesus Christ then restricted His words to matters concerning the earthly kingdom. When Israel, rejecting this kingdom, crucified the Son of Man, His petition

1. A.E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 24, p. 77.

2. Brilliant radiance.

3. Gospel.

4. "*Hard to be understood*" (KJV).

for their forgiveness was granted and, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, this kingdom was once more heralded by the apostles through holy spirit. Further rejection would be a sin against this holy spirit and could not be forgiven. Yet – and this is most important – God’s covenant with this people will yet be honored!

The question is repeated. Why were the apostles and their nation left in ignorance concerning the celestial supremacy of Christ Jesus, our Lord? The following details are submitted in explanation:

Beside the vacant tomb, our Lord consoled Mary Magdalene, beseeching her not to touch Him.

*Lo! I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God (John 20:17).*

How privileged she was to be the only mortal to speak to and behold the resurrected Son of God’s love, prior to His Father presenting Him in exalted glory to the celestials!

In the Scriptures, omissions are often of supreme significance. To accord with the character of the account this ascension of our Lord is mentioned only here. The other narratives omit it entirely. But it is still more significant to note the silence as to the nature and object of this ascension. The reason is clear. John is not detailing the celestial glories of Christ. That belongs to Paul’s later ministry.<sup>5</sup>

To the question posed by the apostles concerning the kingdom, our Lord answered,

*Not yours is it to know times or eras which the Father placed in His Own jurisdiction (Acts 1:7).*

### **TRANSCENDENT REVELATIONS NOW ANNOUNCED BY PAUL**

Many years later, when it became clear “... *that callousness, in part, on Israel has come*” (Romans 11:25), Paul declared,

*Now if God, wanting to display His indignation and to make His powerful doings known, carries, with much patience, the vessels of indignation, adapted for destruction, it is that He should also be making known the riches of His glory on the*

*vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory – us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also (Romans 9:22-24).*

Consequently, it must be concluded, quite simply, that *then* such stupendous revelations would have been premature.

### **OUT OF AN INSTALLMENT**

When Paul was arrested on his way to Damascus, our Lord revealed Himself with these words:

*I am Jesus Whom you are persecuting.*

It is most comforting to note this and to reflect that every hurt and humility suffered by each one of the *ecclesia* is, in effect, directed at Him Whom we gladly serve. Such awareness should both sustain and also assist us to comprehend the final words of Stephen and Paul as they faced imminent death.

Later in his ministry, Paul wrote of the transcendent revelations which were granted to him when he was snatched away to the third heaven, but he intimated that he was not allowed to speak of these (II Corinthians 12:2-7). How well he understood the need for progression, for he also stated,

*At present I know out of an installment,<sup>6</sup> yet then I shall recognize according as I am recognized also (I Corinthians 13:12).*

When his epistles were written from prison in Rome there was no such reserve. He then clearly set forth the secrets which complete God’s wondrous revelation! Now, indeed, we should see *face to face!*

During the temporary period of Israel’s callousness, Paul, as the Christ-appointed administrator of the evangel of the grace of God for the nations, blazed forth the triumphant declaration that *now*,

*... may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord; in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence, through His faith (Ephesians 3:8-12).*

5. A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*, p. 173.

6. “See through a glass darkly” (KJV).

The recipients of his letters in Corinth were unaware of his omitting these “*transcendent revelations*.” Yet he did disclose the secret of resurrection. More than this would have been premature.

All of our Lord’s recorded words on earth are treasured, but we should not look among these for disclosure of God’s ultimate loving consummation. Since it is realized that such a statement may cause some pain or grief, it is well to add that Jesus Himself stated,

*I was not commissioned except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matthew 15:24).

### A CHOICE INSTRUMENT

It may be a great strain on the faith of some in the *ecclesia* to accept this declaration, so the amazing conversion of Paul is once more referred to, together with our Lord’s words to Ananias:

*Go, for he is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel, for I shall be intimating to him how much he must be suffering for My name’s sake* (Acts 9:15-16).

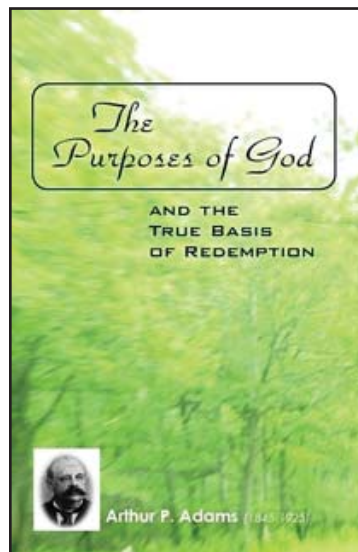
Only Paul was given the privilege of announcing the *fullest* details of God’s glory through the sacrifice of His beloved Son (Philippians 2:5-11).

God has lovingly provided a complete record of all of His wise purpose for creation. Through the spirit of truth, He has inspired devoted saints, placing into them a deep yearning to present faithfully His words as accurately as possible. Yet if there are struggles in this cause, nevertheless it is graciously granted to be suffering for Christ’s sake (Philippians 1:29).

### THE APPROPRIATE TIME

As God’s Word was unfolding, certain revelations were held back until the appropriate time for their proclamation. In retrospection, relying completely on the guidance of the spirit of truth, it becomes obvious that premature confiding of many precious truths would have frustrated the outcome of certain important events which, consequently, were omitted from previous revelation.

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This is a compilation of some of Arthur P. Adams’ smaller works that first appeared in his periodical *The Spirit of the Word* in 1885. Adams suffered greatly for the truths presented here. The riches found within these pages deserve to be preserved for future generations. Even though Adams wrote over one hundred years ago, in many ways his writings are just as fresh as if they had been written today.

*This is THE TRUE BASIS OF REDEMPTION – God our Creator, responsible for His Own creation, and every attribute of His being pledged to its successful completion. God is able, and He will. The creature may rest secure on that basis – the all sufficient ground and full assurance of his deliverance and final triumph in the redemption of Jesus Christ. – A.P. Adams*

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