



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 15

### *The Believer's Greatest Need*

by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913), edited and abridged

**T**here is one thing that the believer needs more than any other thing. One thing on which all others rest; and on which all others turn.

It is certain from the Word of God, and also from our own experience, that “*we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:26). He knoweth what we should pray for. He knoweth what we need. He teacheth us to pray, and in Ephesians 1:17, we have His prayer set forth in these words: “*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*”

#### **The Knowledge of Him**

This, then, must be our greatest need: **A true knowledge of God.**

If the Holy Spirit thus puts it before all other things, it must be because it is more important than any other thing; yea than all others put together.

This, it is, that lies at the foundation of the believer's faith; at the threshold of believer's life.

It is the essence of all **trust**. We cannot trust a person if we do not **know** him. At least, it is safer for us not to do so; and as a rule we do not.

On the other hand, when we know a person thoroughly well, **we cannot help but to trust him**. No effort to trust is required when we perfectly know a [trustworthy] person. The difficulty then is, not to trust.

Why, then, do we not thus trust God? Is not the answer clear? **It is because we do not know Him!**

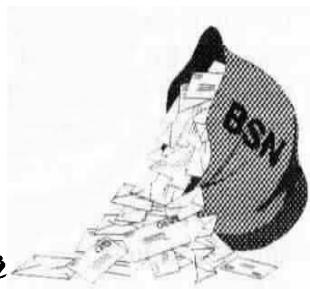
Thus we see how this knowledge of God is our greatest need; the very **first** step of our [daily walk]. Our trust will ever be in **proportion to our knowledge**.

If we knew, for example a billionth of God's infinite **wisdom**, we should see our own to be such utter folly, that we should not merely be “willing” for His will, but we should **desire** it.

[The] believer's walk will be in direct proportion to our knowledge of God. Look at Colossians 1:9, 10 where we have the practical outcome of the prayer of Ephesians 1:17. In Colossians 1:9, 10 we have it applied for our correction and instruction. Carefully weigh the words. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire” – Desire what? “*that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*” Why? For what purpose? To what end? “*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good*

(continued on page 119)

# Letters to the Editor



"Thank you for opening our eyes to many new things in Christ ... Pray that the Lord would open the hearts of the people here to the truth of rightly dividing." MAINE

"I have read through, for the second time, your latest BSN and found it to be excellent ... Thank you, young brother, for what you are doing. Every seed finds root when it is from the Word of God and glorifying to Christ our Saviour ..." ALABAMA

"I just got your BSN issue #13 about *Divine Acceptance* and it blew my socks off! ... I now have hope, great hope ... knowing the battle is the Lord's! Thanks for a great edition!" CALIFORNIA

"Thank You! We really appreciate your knowledge in God's Word! You've helped us in our growth as well as others and we are grateful for this. Keep looking up!"

PENNSYLVANIA

"What a treasure it is for us to be able to fellowship with those of like faith ... We want to thank you for your stand and we have and will continue to thank and praise the Lord." MAINE

"Thank you for the back issues of -- how exciting. We are enjoying the BSN very much." CALIFORNIA

"Thank you for the BSN. Your publication is going to be used as my study lesson with a new sister in the Lord. Please add her name to your mailing list as well. Thanks again for your

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## Bible Student's Notebook

This biweekly publication (24 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 the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

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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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work, and increasing in **the knowledge of God.**” Then, to walk worthy of the Lord, I must know Him? Exactly so. If I would please Him in all things I must know what will please Him. Is this all that is required? All that I have to do? Yes, this is all. I have to sit down before God’s Word, and get to know Him through it. There is **no** other way of getting to know Him. And He has given us His Word, and revealed Himself **therein**, on purpose that we may study it and find out what it is that pleases Him; what He loves, what it is He hates, what it is He does. To get to know His wisdom, His will, His infinite love, His almighty power, His faithfulness, His holiness, His righteousness, His truth, His goodness and mercy, His longsuffering, His gentleness, His care, and all the innumerable attributes of our great and glorious God.

See how this knowledge is absolutely necessary, if we would please God.

We cannot please any of our friends unless we know what they are pleased with. If we would make a present to one of them, we naturally think, what it is he or she needs or would be pleased to have. If we are receiving a guest, we naturally try to remember or find out what pleases him in food or drink, in occupation or recreation. If we cannot find this out, then we have to guess at it, and we may or may not succeed in our effort to please. We may take the greatest trouble and pains, and yet, after all, we may arrange for or provide the very thing which is most disliked.

It is even so with God. How are we to discover the things He approves? **ONLY FROM HIS WORD.**

### **Only from His Word**

There, and there **alone** can we **get to know** Him. There alone shall we learn the fullness of the Spirit’s prayer for us in Ephesians 1:17; and the blessed practical outcome of it in Colossians 1:9, 10.

No man has this knowledge of God intuitively. No

minister can even help in imparting it, **except in** and **by the ministry of that WORD.** His own thoughts are valueless. Only so far as he enables us to understand that Word can he be of any assistance to us. He may be mistaken himself, and very easily be a hindrance instead of a help. God has revealed Himself in His written Word, the Scriptures of truth, and in the Living Word, His Son Jesus Christ. And it is by the Communicated Word revealed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that we begin thus **to get to know** Him, whom to know is Life Eternal. [“*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*” John 17:3.]

This is the one great reason why the written Word is given to us. It is not given merely as a book of general information, or of reference; but it is given to make known the invisible God.

Why do we read it? Why do we open it at all? What is, or ought to be, our object in reading it?

Do we read a portion that someone else has selected for us? Do we read that portion because we have promised someone we would do so? Or do we open it, and sit down before it with the one dominant object **to find out God;** to discover His mind; to get to know His will.

Those who are not thus engaged make their **own god** out of their **own** thoughts and imaginations. They have to fall back on what they **think** their god likes!

Thousands make their gods with their hands, out of wood, or stone, or bread. Thousands more make him out of their own **heads.** But, being ignorant of God’s Word, they are alike ignorant of the God Who has there revealed Himself.

### **Public Worship**

See the power of this truth as it is applied to what is called “Public Worship” or “Divine Service.”

How many still worship “the unknown God;” and serve themselves; and do what is pleasing in their own eyes, studying only their own tastes! Ignorance of that great rubric, John 4:24, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth,” they talk of the kind of service they prefer, and say, “I don’t like that at all;” or, “I do like that so much;” as though “places of worship,” so-called, were opened merely for persons to go in and do what pleases themselves, forgetful of that word “MUST,” which dominates the whole sphere of what we call worship.

Worship “must” be only with the spirit. We cannot worship God – who is a Spirit – with our **eyes**, by looking on at what is being done. We cannot worship God with our **noses**, by smelling incense, whether ceremonially or otherwise used. We cannot worship God with our **ears**, by listening to music, however well it may be “rendered.”<sup>1</sup> No! worship cannot be with any of our **senses**; or by all of them put together. It must be spiritual, and not **sensual**. The worshippers must be spiritual worshippers, “*for the Father seeketh such to worship Him*” (John 4:23).

How many of such worshippers frequent our churches? How many are still worshipping the “*unknown God*” (Acts 27:23)?

It is possible that, if the true God were known – the great, the High and Holy God, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands; the God who inhabiteth eternity; the God in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, and who chargeth His angels with folly – is it possible, we ask, that any who know Him could imagine, for one moment, that He “seeks” or could be pleased with, or accept, or regard a congregation turning the Bible into a “book of the words,” and listening, for example, to a girl singing a solo, getting as high a note as she can, and holding it out as long as she can [performance]! Is THAT what the Great and Infinite God is seeking? Is that the occupation of

the heart with Himself which He says He “MUST” have? No indeed! **And the greater the ignorance of God, the deeper and more degraded will become the accompaniments of what is called “Public Worship.”**

## Prayer

Consider further, the effect of this great truth on our daily life. What rest and peace it brings. Look at its influence on our prayers. What is prayer for? Prayer is intended to humble us before the Mighty God.

Instead of that what do we find? We turn that which is meant to humble us into a throne, from which we dictate to God what He shall do in our affairs, how He shall help carry out our plans, what He shall do among the governments and political affairs of the world. That is the outcome of the pride of the “old man” within us, i.e., so that we, who cannot manage our own affairs, do not hesitate to take on ourselves the management of the universe, and “move the hand that moves the world.”

A true knowledge of God would lead to a very different condition of things. We should cease to pray as though we had more compassion than He had; as though we were more concerned about sins and sinners than He is; as though we were more interested in His work than He is.

We should be “definite” indeed, as well we may be in many things where **from His Word**, we know **what to ask**. We should say, “OH! that I may be filled with such a knowledge of Thy will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that I may enjoy the perfect rest which that knowledge will give.”

In **proportion**, as we have this knowledge of God and of His will, shall we in this manner make known our requests unto Him.

Oh to know the love, and power, and wisdom of

1. The believer can use music for doctrinal instruction – Colossians 3:16.

our God. What a revolution it would make in our prayers as well as our lives.

## Missionary Work

But look again at another effect of this knowledge of God as applied to missionary work. What is the work of the missionary? He offers himself and is accepted. He is trained for his service, and he learns the particular language. The moment at length arrives when he is able to speak that language, and the opportunity comes to speak. Now, what is he going to say? What is the first thing that must come out from His opened lips? Is it not to explain his God to that heathen man or woman? Is it not to show how far the living God is above all their ideas? Is it not to tell how God has revealed Himself in His Word and to explain that revelation, and minister **the Word**?

We thus see how a true knowledge of God lies at the threshold of all missionary work. How can a man explain God unless he Knows God? And how can God be known **apart from His Word**? Hence the **supreme necessity** of so **studying that Word** that we may not only enjoy but be able to speak of Him, of Whom that Word is sent to testify.<sup>2</sup>

## Knowledge of The Lord Jesus Christ

So far we have spoken only of a knowledge of God the Father. But it is also of the greatest importance that we should have a true knowledge of Christ.

This is the believer's **one** object, as well as his **greatest need**.

This is set forth with remarkable clearness and force in Philippians chapter three. In the ninth verse we have our standing in Christ expressed in

2. Is not this supreme necessity so clearly established in Luke 10:38-42? Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." Jesus said that "one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Thus the Word is the one needful thing of our lives. And it is of eternal value and profit, it shall not be taken away!

the words, "**FOUND IN HIM.**"

## Found In Him

This is explained as not having our own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness "*which is through the faith of Christ.*"

When covered with Christ's righteousness there is nothing of self seen in our standing before God. We are already seated "*together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*" and are comely in all His comeliness, perfect in all His perfection, accepted in all His merit, righteous as He is righteous; yea, holy as He is holy, and loved as He is loved.<sup>3</sup> All this is included in those words, "**found in Him.**"

## Like Him

And being thus "*found in Him*" for our **standing**, we have in verses 20 and 21 our **hope**, which is to be "**LIKE HIM**" in resurrection and ascension glory at His coming. Hence, "*we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*"

This is our "**blessed hope.**" We have referred to it here, and not in the order in which it stands in this chapter, in order to show what it is that lies between the two – the beginning and the end of our course. What is it that is to fill the place between the two? What is to occupy our hearts from the moment when we were in Christ, who is our life, to the moment when we shall be like Christ, who shall be our glory? What is the one **object** that is to ever fill our hearts and occupy our minds?

## "That I May KNOW HIM"

This is henceforth the Believer's great objective.

3. See Colossians 2:10; I Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:6.

Nothing but this aim to **get to know Christ.**

## Knowing Christ in a New Way

As verse nine contained the explanation of the words “*found in Him*,” so this verse (ten) contains the explanation of how and why we are to get to know Christ.

We are henceforth no longer to know Him after the flesh, but to get to know Him as risen; the [resurrected] Head [of the Body]:

“*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (II Corinthians 5:16-17).

This is how this knowledge is explained “*that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.*” Not to know merely the historical **fact** of His resurrection, but the “power” of it: *i.e.*, what its wondrous power has done for us. But how can we get to know this “power”? Ah! only by “*the fellowship of His sufferings:*” by learning that when He (the Head of the Body) suffered, all the members suffered in mysterious and blessed “fellowship with Him.”<sup>4</sup> Thus shall we get to know how we were “*made conformable unto His death.*” Only when we have thus learned that we suffered when He suffered, and died when He died, can we begin to learn how we have risen also with Christ; and to know “*the power of His resurrection.*”

How few of us know what this “power” is, as it takes us out of the old creation and sets us in the new creation, where “*all things are of God*” (II Corinthians 5:17-18).

4. And where do we learn of all this? In the written Word of God!

This then is our objective, to get to know all that Christ is made unto us in resurrection power.<sup>5</sup> How startling must these words have been as they fell upon the ears of the Greeks (for this is the first city in which Paul set his foot in Europe). They had been brought up on the “great” motto of Solon, the “wisest” of the seven wise men of Greece. His motto was supposed by them to embody in itself the essence of all wisdom; and it consisted of only two words, which were carved over the entrance of the schools and colleges of Greece: *Gnosthe Seauton, “KNOW THYSELF.”*

## Know Thyself

But yet, how foolish are those words. For how can one know anything of himself by considering himself? If he looks at others, then he can see how different he is from them; and how much better or worse he may be than they.

But it is only when we compare ourself with Christ, who is the wisdom and glory of God, that we learn what we really are; and how far short we come of that glory. “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” Romans 3:23. It is only as we see ourselves by the side of the plumb line of that Perfection that we see, and get to know our **absolutely lost** and **ruined** condition. Hence this new motto was thundered from heaven into the ears of those who sought to know themselves – “*that i may know Him.*”

Yes, this is our one objective. It is this that will have the mighty transforming power over our lives. Every moment spent in seeking to know ourselves is a moment lost: and not only lost, but used to keep us from the one thing that alone can accomplish our object and teach us ourselves. Trying to know ourselves, we not only fail in the attempt, but we cease to learn Christ, which alone teaches us to know ourselves.

5. The truths of this “resurrection power” are sometimes known as “identification truths.” (Not to be confused with the false teaching of British-Israelism’s “identity movement.”)

Yet how many are spending their lives in this **vain** search? Running hither and thither to hear this man and that man. And, being consistently directed to this self-occupation, self-surrender, and self-examination, they are only led into trouble, or, into a “joy” which lasts only while the excitement is kept up.

Oh! to be occupied with Christ; to have Him for our object; and His resurrection power for our lives.

This we shall have; and have increasingly as we get to know Christ.

Again. What was it that led the heathen world into all its darkness, corruption, and sin? Just this: *“they did not like to retain God in their knowledge ... Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man”* (Romans 1:22, 23, 28).

Like people today who, ignorant of God as He has revealed Himself **in His Word**, make their god, some with their own hands, or out of their own heads, vainly imagining He is what they think He is, and worshipping, like the heathen, *“the unknown God,”* such an one as themselves.

What was it that lead Israel astray? Isaiah opens with the Divine indictment, which gathers up in the briefest form the one great cause which lay at the root of all:

*“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth **not know**, my people doth not consider”* (Isaiah 1:3).

See how the Lord Jesus confirms this in Luke 19:42-44, as He weeps over Jerusalem. All is summed up in the opening and closing words: *“If thou hadst **known**, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!”*

Then, turning to the reason for that judgement, He adds: *“Because thou **knowest not** the time of thy visitation.”*

What is to be the acme of Israel’s glory in the *“day of thy visitation?”*

Ah! then it shall come to pass that *“they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:34).

What shall be Creation’s glory; and the peace and joy of the whole earth? This sums up all: *“The earth shall be full of the **knowledge** of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Isaiah 11:9).

So what is the secret of our being able to glory only in the Lord, and to enjoy His blessing in this the day of visitation? It is given in Jeremiah 9:23, 24:

*“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, **that he understandeth and knoweth Me ...”***

We are thus brought round, and brought back to the one great duty, which should henceforth absorb our hearts and minds, and fill our days and years; viz., to be instant in our study of the Word of God, which is given to us with the one great, express, commanding purpose – the revelation of Himself, in order that we may **KNOW HIM**.

– An edited & abridged work of Ethelbert W. Bullinger

Biographical note: E.W. Bullinger was an impassioned student of the Scriptures. He authored the *Companion Bible*, *The Church Epistles*, *Two Natures of the Child of God*, and numerous other outstanding Bible study works. He served as the president of the Trinitarian Bible Society as well as the editor of *Things To Come* magazine. He

# *The Fellowship of the Mystery*

by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.  
Ephesians 3:9

I. As Members of the Body of Christ We Now Have Fellowship With God (Ephesians 3:9).

Fellowship defined:

A. Webster: Companionship ... Mutual Association of persons on equal and friendly terms; familiar intercourse.

B. Strong: Partnership ... intercourse: communion

II. This Fellowship is Mystery Fellowship (Ephesians 3:9), in contrast to the Prophetic Fellowship of I John.

The nature of the presentation of Jesus Christ in I John is after the flesh (1:1-5; 4:2-3; II John 7; c.f. II Corinthians 5:16).

III. This Fellowship that we enjoy is Mystery Fellowship because it is Based Upon our Identity with the *finished cross work of Christ* (Philippians 1:5).

Our fellowship is based on the Grace of Christ:

A. Christ's Finished Work.

(continued from page 118)

faithfulness and dedication to the Word." ILLINOIS

"Thank you! We were so excited upon receiving the donated booklets you sent to us! These will certainly enable us to gain a better understanding as well as explaining to others about the grace of God and His Word - rightly divided (II Timothy 2:15)." (inmate) FLORIDA

"I thank you very much for the BSN. Please

B. Our Identity with Christ in His Finished Work.

IV. This Fellowship of the Mystery, because it is based on **Christ's finished cross work**; it is *unconditional* (I Corinthians 1:9).

It is unlike the Contrasting Conditional Fellowship of Prophecy (I John 1:6-7), which is directly related to the Confession and Forgiveness of sins.

The Fellowship of Prophecy is Conditioned upon Confession (I John 1:9; in accordance with the law – Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 51). Confessional forgiveness is foreign to Paul's message (Colossians 1:14; 2:13). Paul mentions forgiveness six times. It is the counterpart of justification (a once-for-all act). "Parental forgiveness" is unknown to the Bible.

The Advocate Ministry is in view in I John (2:1). Advocate is defined by Webster as, "... One who pleads the cause of another in a court of civil law."

The Body of Christ needs no advocate (c.f. Romans 8:33). We have the righteous standing of God's Son. We are justified!! *This is the fellowship of the mystery.* ■

keep me on your mailing list! I also wanted you to know that the BSN's I have, I am passing around. There is a group of seven men here that are studying and believe in the dispensation of grace." (inmate) FLORIDA

"Recently somebody told me about the gospel of grace, although I don't understand. I'm interested in your Bible Student's Notebook and anything else that would be helpful to me ..." NEW YORK