



Bible Student's NotebookTM

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 23

Missionary Methods: *Paul's or Ours?*

by – Roland Allen

(These are edited excerpts from Allen's book by the same title. Interestingly enough, Allen was an Anglican "High Churchman" and missionary to China one hundred years ago.)

In little more than ten years Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Before A.D. 47 there were no churches in these provinces; in A.D. 57 Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far west without anxiety lest the churches which he founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support.

So far as the foundation of the churches is concerned, it is perfectly clear that the writer of the Acts intends to represent Paul's work as complete. The churches were really established. Whatever disasters fell upon them in later years, whatever failure there was, whatever ruin, that failure was not due to any insufficiency or lack of care and completeness in the Apostle's teaching or organization. When he left them he left them because his work was fully accomplished.

This is truly an astonishing fact. That churches should be founded so rapidly, so securely, seems to us today, accustomed to the difficulties, the uncertainties, the failures, the disastrous relapses of our own missionary work, almost incredible. Many missionaries in later days have received a larger number of "converts" than Paul; men have preached over a wider area than he; but none have so established churches. We have long

forgotten that such things could be. We have long accustomed ourselves to accept it as an axiom of missionary work that converts in a new country must be submitted to a very long probation and training, extended over generations before they can be expected to be able to stand alone. Today if a man ventures to suggest that there may be something in the methods by which Paul attained such wonderful results worthy of our careful attention, and perhaps of our imitation, he is in danger of being accused of revolutionary tendencies.

Yet this is manifestly not as it should be. It is impossible but that the account so carefully given by Luke of the planting of the churches in the Four Provinces should have something more than a mere archaeological and historical interest. Like the rest of the Holy Scriptures it was "written for our learning." It was certainly meant to be something more than the romantic history of an exceptional man, doing exceptional things under exceptional circumstances – a story from which ordinary people of a later age can get no more instruction for practical missionary work than they receive from the history of the Cid, or from the exploits of King Arthur. It was really intended to throw light on the path of those who would come after.

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Dear Saints of God:

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! With joy we bring you another issue of the BSN. To be able to bring you the BSN on a monthly basis is the fulfillment of a long standing desire. We pray that God will use the BSN to bring honor and glory to Himself, glory which He alone so rightly deserves.

We trust that you will give careful consideration to the feature article of this issue of the BSN, which is on Paul's missionary methods. We have found the truths shared in this article, by a missionary from a century ago, to be profound.

I would also like to remind you of our PURPOSE, ATTITUDE and GOAL in the publication of the BSN.

PURPOSE

1. It is our purpose to glorify the Lord by assisting in the establishment, maturing and equipping of the saints to their fullest potential through continual doctrinal exposure and edification (Colossians 1:28).
2. It is our purpose to glorify the Lord by:
 - A. Purifying the doctrine - "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)
 - B. Propagating the doctrine - "make all men see" (Ephesians 3:9)
 - C. Protecting the doctrine - "set for the defense" (Philippians 1:17).

ATTITUDE

We fully recognize that we have *no* corner on truth, nor does anyone else. No one person or group possesses "all truth" infallibly. We therefore desire to avoid destructive *uniformity* and allow for differences of opinion. We don't expect our readers to agree with everything that appears within the pages of this publication. But we do trust that each one will study out the information and that it will stimulate further Bible study. As another editor has so

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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 (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 the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (1 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; 1 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."

SUBSCRIPTION

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PATRIARCHS

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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The cause that has created this prejudice against the study of the Pauline method is not far to seek. It is due to the fact that every unworthy, idle and slipshod method of missionary work has been fathered upon the Apostle. Men have wandered over the world, "preaching the Word," laying no solid foundations, establishing nothing permanent, leaving no really instructed society behind them, and have claimed Paul's authority for their absurdities. They have gone through the world, spending their time in denouncing ancient religions, in the name of Paul. They have wandered from place to place without any plan or method of any kind, guided in their movements by straws and shadows, persuaded they were imitating Paul on his journey from Antioch to Troas. Almost every intolerable abuse that has ever been known in the mission field has claimed some sentence or act of Paul as its original.

It is in consequence of this, because in the past we have seen missionary work made ridiculous or dangerous by the vagaries of illiterate or unbalanced imitators of the Apostle, that we have allowed ourselves to be carried to the opposite extreme, and to shut our eyes to the profound teaching and practical wisdom of the Pauline method.

Secondly, people have adopted fragments of Paul's method and have tried to incorporate them into alien systems, and the failure that resulted has been used as an argument against the Apostle's method.

When these false and partial attempts at imitating the Apostle's methods have failed, men have declared that the apostolic method was at fault and was quite unsuited to the condition and circumstances of present-day missions. The truth is that they have neither understood nor practiced the Apostle's method at all.

There is yet another and more weighty reason: Paul's method is not in harmony with the modern Western spirit. We modern teachers from the West are by nature and by training persons of

restless activity and boundless self-confidence. We are accustomed to assume an attitude of superiority. We are accustomed to doing things ourselves for ourselves, to finding our own way, to relying upon our own exertions, and we naturally tend to be impatient with others who are less restless and less self-assertive than we are. We are accustomed by long usage to an elaborate system of church organization, and a peculiar code of morality. We cannot imagine any Christianity worthy of the name existing without the elaborate machinery that we have invented. We naturally expect our converts to adopt from us not only essentials but accidentals. We desire to impart not only the Gospel, but the Law and the Customs. With that spirit, Paul's methods do not agree (pp. 3-6).

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There are certain facts in the history of his missionary journeys that demand attention.

Both Luke and Paul speak constantly of the provinces rather than of the cities. The suggestion is that in Paul's view the unit was the province rather than the city. Paul's theory of evangelizing a province was not to preach in every place in it himself, but to establish centers of Christian life in two or three important places from which the knowledge might spread into the country round.

By establishing the church in two or three centers Paul claimed that he had evangelized the whole province. Ten years after his first start from Antioch, he told the Romans that he had, "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum ... fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19), and that he had "no more place in these parts" (15:23) ... When he had occupied two or three centers he had really and effectually occupied the province (pp. 12, 13).

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Paul expected his hearers to be moved. He so believed in his preaching that he knew that it was

“the power of God unto salvation.” This expectation is a very real part of the presentation of the Gospel. Simply to scatter the seed, with a sort of vague hope that some of it may come up somewhere, is not preaching the Gospel. The air of expectation pervades all the accounts of Paul’s preaching. Our idea of “sowing seed” seems to be rather like scattering wheat out of a balloon. Occasionally, of course, grains of wheat scattered out of a balloon will fall upon ploughed and fertile land and will spring up and bear fruit; but it is a casual method of sowing. Paul did not scatter seeds: he planted.

Paul did not establish himself in a place and go on preaching for years to men who refused to act on his teaching. When he brought them to a place where decision was clear, he demanded that they should make their choice. The shaking of “his raiment” (Acts 18:6), the shaking “off the dust of their feet against them,” the refusal to teach those who refuse to act on the teaching, was a vital part of the Pauline presentation of the Gospel.

It is a question that needs serious consideration whether we ought to plant ourselves in a town or village and continue for years teaching people who deliberately refuse to give us a moral hearing. We are afraid to take the responsibility that morally rests upon us of shaking our raiment. We have lost the art (pp. 74-75).

[And how do we know when one is responding in faith to the doctrine? The Word believed *becomes* effectual! (I Thessalonians 2:13; the “faithful” men of II Timothy 2:2 is first objective, then subjective!)]

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The first and most striking difference between his [Paul’s] action and ours is that he founded “churches” whilst we found “missions.” The establishment of missions is a peculiarity of our modern methods ... We can gather in converts, we often gather in large numbers; but we cannot train them to maintain their own spiritual life. We

cannot establish the church on a self-supporting basis. Our converts often display great virtues, but they remain, too often for generations, dependent upon us (pp. 82-83).

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The Shortness of Paul’s Stay with New Believers

The facts are these: Paul preached in a place for five or six months and then left behind him a church, not indeed free from the need of guidance, but capable of growth and expansion. For example, according to [William M.] Ramsay, Paul preached in Lystra for about six months on his first missionary journey, and then he ordained elders and left for about eighteen months. After that he visited the church for the second time, but only spent a few months in the province. Then for the last time, after an interval of three years, he visited them again, but again he was only a month or two in the province. From this it is clear that the churches of Galatia were really founded and established in the first visit ...

Similarly in Macedonia, Professor Ramsay calculates that Paul did not stay in Thessalonica more than five months, and he did not visit the place again for over five years, yet he writes to “the church of the Thessalonians” ... At Corinth Paul spent a year and a half at his first visit and then did not go there again for three or four years, but he wrote letters as to a fully equipped and well-established church.

With the appointment of elders the churches were complete. They were fully equipped ... They no longer depended necessarily upon Paul. If he went away, or if he died, the churches remained ... They were no longer dependent upon the Apostle, but they were not independent of him.

Now these are typical examples of his work ...

Paradoxical as it may seem, I think that it is quite possible that the shortness of his stay may have conduced in no small measure to Paul's success. There is something in the presence of a "great" teacher that sometimes tends to prevent "smaller" men from realizing themselves. They more readily feel their responsibility ... when they see that, unless they come forward, nothing will be done. By leaving them quickly Paul gave the local leaders opportunity to take their proper place, and forced the church to realize that it could not depend on him, but must depend upon its own resources ...

One other effect of Paul's training is very clear. His converts became missionaries ...

The reason of our failure is, I believe, largely due to the fact that we quench the Spirit. We educate our converts to think, as we, accustomed to a long-established and highly organized church, naturally think, that none but duly appointed ministers may preach. We dread the possible mistakes of individual zeal. The result is that our converts hesitate to speak to others. They throw the responsibility upon the 'licensed' evangelist and 'the mission.' They do not feel any responsibility to evangelize. Their mouths are closed ...

We need to begin again to teach ourselves and our people what Spirit we are of, and to give liberty that the word of the Lord may have free course. When we do that, the church will again reveal itself in its true character and become self-propagating (pp. 84-85, 93-94).

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Underlying Principles of Paul

The principles which seem to underlie all the Apostle's practice were two: (1) that he was a preacher of Gospel, not of law, and (2) that he must retire from his converts to give place for Christ. The spirit in which he was able to do this was the spirit of faith.

1. Paul was a preacher of a Gospel, not of a law.

His Epistles are full of this. He reiterates it again and again ... He was a preacher of the Gospel as opposed to the system of law. He lived in a dispensation of Gospel as opposed to a dispensation of law. He administered a Gospel, not a law. His method was a method of Gospel, not a method of law ... This is the most distinctive mark of Pauline Christianity. This is what separates his doctrine from all other systems of religion ...

2. He practiced retirement, not merely by constraint, but willingly.

He gave place for Christ. He was always glad when his converts could progress without his aid. He welcomed their liberty. He withheld no gift from them that might enable them to dispense with his presence...

He gave freely, and then he retired from them that they might learn to exercise the powers that they possessed in Christ. He warned them of dangers, but he did not provide an elaborate machinery to prevent them from succumbing to the dangers.

To do this required great faith; and this faith is the spiritual power in which Paul won his victory. He believed in the Holy Ghost, not merely vaguely as a spiritual Power, but as a Person indwelling them (pp. 148-149).

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). ■

The Profoundness: God's Amazing Book

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

Part IV

Text: *Ecclesiastes 12:12*

The Bible is a peerless book. In this lesson we shall briefly assess the profoundness of God's amazing book.

I. Its Unity

The Bible stands absolutely apart from all other books in its unity. There is a continual flow throughout the Bible.

Although the Bible is composed of 66 books, written by about 40 authors, in three languages, over a 1600 year period, its contents manifest a unity that demonstrates a Master designer!

II. Its Claims

The Bible stands absolutely apart from all other books in its claims.

We discussed the unique claims of the Bible in our first lesson in this series. The Bible claims to be:

- A. Divine
- B. Alive
- C. Mighty
- D. Sharp
- E. Discerning
- F. Inspired
- G. Perfect
- H. Authoritative
- I. Eternal
- J. Magnified

III. Its Accuracy

The accuracy of the Bible is demonstrated:

A. Prophetically

The Bible gives prophecies with detailed accuracy. (We shall take a brief look at this under Section IX of this lesson).

B. Historically

Although the Bible is not *primarily* a History book, when it speaks of history it speaks with accuracy.

C. Archaeologically

The greatest museum pieces attest to the truth of the Bible.

D. Scientifically

Although the Bible is not *primarily* a Science book, when it speaks of science it speaks with accuracy.

1. The Time "Zones" – Luke 17:30, 34-36
2. The Round Earth – Isaiah 40:22
3. The Water Cycle – Ecclesiastes 1:6, 7
4. The Cleansing Value of Running Water – Leviticus 15:13 ("Modern" science was 32 centuries late!)
5. The Rotation of the Earth – Job 38:14
6. The Springs of the Sea – Job 38:16

7. The Value of Snow – Job 38:22
8. The Parting of Light – Job 38:24

IV. Its Indestructibility

Most books last less than twenty years. A few last more than one hundred. Only a minute fraction last over 1,000 years. Yet the Bible in its newest part is almost two thousand years old; and in its oldest part, it is about three thousand six hundred years.

V. Its Circulation

“In 1450 Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press, followed by the development of movable type in 1454.

“The first book to come off the Gutenberg press was ... the Bible!

“Up until that time, through the efforts of copyists, one Bible took ten months to complete and was prohibitive to the masses. Now, with the advent of the printing press, thousands of copies could be produced swiftly and distributed at a price within the reach of men of all stations of life.” (The Unforgettable Story of the English Bible – Zion’s Fire Vol. 2 No. 3 page 10.)

The Bible is the oldest and most circulated book in existence. By 1981, all or portions of the Bible had been translated into over 1,700 languages. This represents what is spoken by 98% of the world’s population.

It is truly a universal book.

VI. Its Influence

There has never been a book that has had such an impact upon individuals and society. Its greatest influence is its transforming power. It changes lives!

VII. Its Unlimited Adaptation

The Bible is the book of:

- A. All Times
- B. All Ages
- C. All Cultures
- D. All Classes

VIII. Its Layout

The layout of the Bible shows its Divine nature:

- A. Past (Genesis through Acts)
- B. Present (Romans through Philemon)
- C. Future (Hebrews through Revelation)

IX. Its Fulfilled Prophecy

When it comes to prophecy the Bible gives information that is exact and detailed.

Example: Over three hundred prophecies (333 by some counts) were fulfilled in the life of Christ alone. Following are a few examples:¹

- A. Born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
- B. Born of the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23,33)
- C. Born of the Line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23,32)
- D. Born of the House of David (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23, 31)
- E. Born of a Virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 24, 25)

The Bible is the most profound book ever written; after all it is God’s book! ■

1. This subject will be looked at in more detail in a future series, “An Introduction to the Doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Marriage

Husband and Wife Defined

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME

Part VI

As you may have noticed from the preceding lessons in this series, there is a common misunderstanding in our day concerning the words “husband” and “wife.” Let’s get a definition of these two words. You may be surprised at the simplicity of their definition!

I. The Definition of the Word *Wife*

“Wife” in the Bible simply means “woman.” In fact the words (both Hebrew and Greek) used to translate “wife” are also translated “woman” (in its various forms) in over four hundred verses.

II. The Definition of the Word *Husband*

The same thing is true about the word “husband.” It means “man” and is so translated, in its various forms, in almost thirteen hundred verses.

Bullinger says that “the context decides the meaning” of this word.

III. The Disposition of the Words

The idea is that a man’s “wife” is his “woman” and a woman’s “husband” is her “man.”

It is interesting that in Genesis 7:2 the word for wife has been also translated “his female.”

The words “husband” and “wife” have to do with a *possessive relationship of commitment*, of belonging to one another (i.e., a relationship of possession).

A man can have a woman/wife, but he is not married to her until his flesh joins hers. Remember that Joseph and Mary were “husband and wife” (Matthew 1:19, 20, 24) prior to their “coming together” (vs. 18) with flesh joining flesh (vs. 25). This means that it is possible for a virgin to be a wife and have a husband (Joel 1:8).

IV. The Definition of the Word *Fornication*

To help bring this and past lessons into a little clearer light, let us also take a look at the word “fornication.”

Fornication is often presented as a specific sexual sin: “premarital” sex; but fornication is **any** act of sexual deviation; whether it be adultery (Ezekiel 16:15, 26, 29, 32), incest (I Corinthians 5:1), sodomy (Jude 7), etc. Just what is sexual deviation? *Any* sexual activity with *anyone* other than one’s spouse!

The divine plan is that a man and woman are to be *husband and wife* PRIOR to flesh joining flesh (intercourse). This is the *only* correct order before God (Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy. 24:1; c.f. the “married wife” of Isaiah 54:1; also see Romans 7:3). Flesh joining flesh is *reserved by God* for the husband and wife and *any* deviation from this plan is sin (I Corinthians 6:15-17; Hebrews 13:4). ■

The Labor Union:

A Cooperative Servant Community

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Part VI

Text: I Corinthians 3:9

I. OUR LABOR

The believers, standing together in one spirit and with one mind (Philippians 1:27):

A. Purify the Doctrine – “prove all things.”

(I Thessalonians 5:21 – under the direction and coordination of a divinely appointed means: eldership – I Timothy 5:17).

B. Protect the Doctrine – “set for the defense” (Philippians 1:17).

C. Propagate the Doctrine – “make all men see” (Ephesians 3:9; I Thessalonians 1:8).

II. OUR LOVE

Ours is a labor of love – I Thessalonians 1:3; II Corinthians 5:14; 8:8, 9, 24; Ephesians 4:15, 16.

III. OUR LABELS

We are the local manifestation of the Body of Christ and have quite a list of job descriptions:

A. Ambassadors on Foreign Assignment – II Corinthians 5:18-20.

B. Stewards of a Foreign Trust – I Corinthians 4:1-2.

C. Soldiers on Foreign Duty – II Timothy 2:3-4.

D. Athletics at the Olympics – I Corinthians 9:24-25; II Timothy 2:5 (Bring home the gold!).

E. Contractors – I Corinthians 3:9-15.

F. Farmers – Galatians 6:7; II Timothy 2:6.

IV. OUR LEAGUE

The task that has been set before us is so great and serious that it requires the cooperation of the saints to adequately carry on its performance. The lack of unity is one of the greatest hindrances to the work that the Lord has given the church (Philippians 4:2).

A look into the life of Paul would clearly demonstrate the need of teamwork among the saints. Without Paul's helpers where would the dispensation of grace be today? (For a few examples of his partners see Romans 16). Truly the local church is the most important “labor union” in all the world!

The following is a humorous demonstration of our need to work together:

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for more information concerning Block #11 on the insurance form which asks for “cause of injuries” wherein I put “Trying to do the job alone.” You said you needed more information so I trust the following will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade, and on the date of injuries I was working alone laying brick around the top of a four story building when I realized that I had about 500 pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to put them into a barrel and lower them by a pulley which was

fastened to the top of the building. I secured the end of the rope at ground level and went up to the top of the of the building and loaded the bricks into the barrel and swung the barrel out with the bricks in it. I then went down and untied the rope, holding securely to insure the slow descent of the barrel.

As you will note on Block #6 of the insurance form, I weigh 145 pounds. Due to my shock at being jerked off the ground so swiftly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Between the second and third floors I met the barrel coming down. This accounts for the bruises and lacerations on my upper body.

Regaining my presence of mind again, I held tightly to the rope and proceeded rapidly up the side of the building, not stopping until my right hand was jammed in the pulley. This accounts for the broken thumb.

Despite the pain, I retained my presence of mind and held on tightly to the rope. At approx-

imately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed about 50 pounds. I again refer you to Block #6 and my weight.

As you would guess, I began a rapid descent. In the vicinity of the second floor I met the barrel coming up. This explains the injuries to my legs and lower body. Slowed only slightly, I continued my descent, landing on the pile of bricks. This accounts for my sprained back and internal injuries.

I am sorry to report, however, that at this point, I again lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope, and as you can imagine, the empty barrel crashed down on me. This accounts for my head injuries.

I trust this answers your concern. Please know that I am finished "trying to do the job alone." (Letter taken from "Men Without Friends" – by David Smith) ■

A Selection of *The Last Words of the Dying* Part IV

HUME, DAVID (Deistical philosopher, author of Natural Religion)

His housekeeper for many years was with him in his last moments. "His mental agitation was so great at times as to occasion his whole bed to shake! And he would not allow candles to be put out during the night, nor would he be left alone for a minute ... I hope to God I shall never witness a similar scene."

(Evidences by M'Ilvaine as recorded in *Voices from the Edge of Eternity* by John G. Myers p.46)

HUNTER, WILLIAM (English painter)

"If I had strength to hold a pen, I would write

down how easy and pleasant a thing it is to die."

(*Last Words of Saints and Sinners* by Herbert Lockyer p. 126)

HUS, JOHN (Bohemian reformer and martyr)

"What I taught with my lips, I now seal with my blood."

The fagots were then lighted, and the martyr sung a hymn so loud as to be heard through the crackling of the flames.

(*Voices from the Edge of Eternity* by John G. Myers)

God Blessed Us! Everyone!

by – Gary Sorge

In Ephesians 1:3 we read that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. If we look carefully at this verse, we can recognize several precious spiritual truths.

The first is that the blessings that we have are ours – **in Christ**. That is, each spiritual blessing is ours because it is Christ's and each of us became one with Christ at the moment we accepted His grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We were baptized into (identified with) Christ's death (Romans 6:3), and because we are one with Him and have put on the new man that is Christ (Colossians 3:10), we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).

So we understand that all the blessings that we have are *in Christ*, and so are *we*. Further we note that God **has** blessed us with all spiritual blessings – it's already accomplished! The blessings are ours *right now* – not just someday, but *now*, and forever, because they will be Christ's forever, and we are members of His body (I Corinthians 6:27).

But we overlook another important aspect of Ephesians 1:3, and that is the word, "all." To say that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings doesn't only imply that our blessings in the body of Christ are *all* spiritual ones (which is in itself a considerable realization); but the Greek is also translated "*every*." Can you appreciate the enormity of that statement? We have, *right now*, every spiritual blessing there is! Every last one! There is not one spiritual blessing that is not **already** ours. We have it all – **in CHRIST!**

Remembering now that we're not talking about physical blessings, but *real* ones, eternal ones (II Corinthians 4:18), how should knowing this affect the way we pray? Is there any real blessing that God has held back from us? Read Ephesians 1:3 again. There is not! Whether or not we like to admit it, it's now in our hands. God has already done everything He had to do. He has dealt with sin once and forever (Hebrews 10:12); He has exalted His Son to sit at His right hand (Hebrews 1:3); He has made us to be joint-heirs with Christ (not share-holders mind you, but joint-heirs – everything that is Christ's is ours – Romans 8:17); He has made us inseparable from Christ (Ephesians 5:30-32); He has even given us His written Word as an all-inclusive book of instructions. *It's our move.*

The destination of the Church, the body of Christ, has been pre-determined from eternity past. But it's size and doctrinal maturity has not. That is entirely in our hands. We are the stewards of the mystery. His physical representation in the world today is through us. He does not work outside of His Body, but through it, according to the Word rightly divided.

The Word of God rightly divided has changed our understanding of God's dealing with man. Let it also change our pattern of prayer. The next time we're inclined to ask God for something, we'd do well to remember that there is nothing left to ask for. He's already done all that was necessary. The next time we think to ask God to bless us, let's remember Ephesians 1:3.

Bless Us? God already did! There's not one blessing left to give. It's all ours, *in CHRIST*. God bless? Hey ... God *blessed us, every one!* ■

Your Part

Now that you have read this BSN, it's your turn.

If the truths presented here have helped you, don't let these truths die in your hands.

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts concerning its content.

Consider assisting us in getting this publication into the hands of those who would be encouraged and strengthened by its message:

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We would be honored to have your fellowship in getting this publication freely to those who hunger spiritually. We have daily opportunities to send it to pastors, Sunday school teachers, Bible college professors and students, Bible class teachers, and prisoners.

well said, "I hope anyone following after me will go further than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the Word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found."

And as we stated in our very first issue, "Do not be surprised if, from time to time, you read articles which reflect *change* from previous things which have been said or written. This is PROGRESS. All that we ask of you is that you keep an *open* Bible **and** an *open* mind."

GOAL

While it is our goal to print that which we believe will benefit the Body of Christ, we realize that we may, at times, publish that which might have been best left unpublished. If we realize this disservice to the Body, we will apologize.

We realize that on occasions we may be misunderstood. If we are aware of this we will attempt to clarify ourselves. And if you disagree with us, please feel free to write. We will endeavor to handle all inquiries with Christian love and kindness and we would appreciate the same from you, as you write to us.

We love you!
Until next time,

Your Brother,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
12/1994