



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 42

### *Christ Our Life*

by – T. Austin-Sparks

*“When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4)*

One of the main objects of the Holy Spirit is to get believers really identified with Christ as the risen and exalted Lord, and to make His risen life real in their experience. As the age moves toward its consummation -- the appearing of Christ -- two features will become increasingly evident. On the one hand *things*, men, movements, institutions, organizations, etc., will predominate and draw multitudes after them, and will attach the crowds to themselves. On the other hand, with a growing disappointment and disillusionment over these, a minority will turn to the Lord *Himself* to find Him *alone* as their life.

There will be three elements that will characterize all this. One is the unmistakable development of the principle of Antichrist; that which will definitely *supplant* Christ, or intend to do so. The second is the alternative to the *whole* Christ found in man-made Christianity, an *imitation* life born and carried on by its own momentum (a “form of godliness”) ... The third, a deep and genuine quest for reality, truth, and *inward* knowledge of the Lord *Himself*. In the first two it will be the naked worship of man in human power: a tremendous overflow of humanism, the wonder and glory of man. The third will be *Christ altogether as the life*.

If the Christian is attached to some *thing*, such as a teaching, a tradition, an institution, a movement, or a person, the end will certainly be a limitation of life and eventually confusion and disappointment, perhaps worse. Paul makes it unmistakably clear and emphatic that the destiny of all is to be Christ

“all, and in all.” We must learn that a true work of the Spirit of God is to attach *everything* to Christ *Himself*. He, Christ, must be the life of our spirit, the “inner man,” so that we are strong *in the Lord*: not in ourselves, not in others, nor in things. We shall have to survive adversity by His strength within alone.

It is the Lord *Himself*, and for this to be so, it often has to be against a background of natural inability. The power of His resurrection is the law of union with Christ from beginning to end. Days of terrific pressure are upon the Lord’s people. Their enemy is taking very little off-time. The only sufficiency is in the Lord *Himself* as our life.

Barnabas exhorted the believers that “with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). There is an utterness about this that will be pressed upon us until the time “when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear.” ■

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Dear saints and faithful brethren in Christ.

### Ohio Trip

Since our last BSN Cindy and I made a trip to Ohio and spent a few days with the saints. We were hosted on our journey by Gary and Nancy Funk. They were in charge of all the arrangements. They lined up teaching opportunities and we stayed in their Miamisburg home and had a blessed time of fellowship.

We focused our teaching on the believer's identification in Christ. Our first meeting was held on a Sunday morning in Cincinnati with Brother Willie Glaspey and the saints that gather with him. This is where Gary and Nancy fellowship. Willie, a former Apostolic minister, has a real heart for God's people. It was a treat to be with him and the saints there. They had open hearts for our lesson on *Who Are You?*

Sunday afternoon we went back to Miamisburg and had an evening of brotherhood around a campfire. Some of the body from Cincinnati came along. Tracy Plessinger had been teaching in the nearby Dayton area and was able to join us with his family. It was a memorable time.

On Monday night we traveled to Chillicothe, meeting with the Stanleys and the believers who gather with them. We all had dinner together in their home and studied *Where On Earth Is God?*, a look at believers as the Temple of God (*i.e.*, God dwelling in us!) We thoroughly enjoyed the evening of hospitality.

On Tuesday night we were joined by the Rinkliffs from Chillicothe for dinner in Miamisburg with Gary and Nancy. All of us were then off to Middletown to be with Trent Cole and the saints there. Trent led his congregation out of the denominational "Church of Christ." It is always so exciting to see where God brings folks from, when He brings them into the wonderful freedom and liberty in Christ.

We studied *Jesus Loves Me This I Know: Does It Get Any Better than This?* This was a look at the special way which God loves members of Christ's body. Once again we found receptive hearts for God's message of identification in grace. (All of the lessons taught during this trip will be found in upcoming issues of the BSN).

We came home from the Ohio trip refreshed in our spirits. We are grateful to Gary and Nancy and all the saints that we were with, for the wonderful reception that we found. While with Gary and Nancy we were able to daily e-mail our children and enjoyed that greatly. Clyde III, once again, did a great job with the store while we were away.

### Bibles for the Philippines

Last year, in cooperation with Dan Gross and others, we were able to assist members of the Body of Christ in getting  
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### Bible Student's Notebook™

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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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### 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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# *Human Government: Where Do We Fit In?*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT AND THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO IT TODAY

### Part V

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

#### **Paul and Taxation**

Our submission also includes the paying of taxes. Christians are not parasites enjoying the benefits of highways, mail service, etc. without helping to pay for them. Neither are we responsible for the way the government uses our tax money any more than we are responsible for the way the airlines or the grocer use the money we pay for service. There are no strings attached to the commands of Romans 13:6, 7: "For this cause pay ye tribute also ... Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."<sup>1</sup>

#### **Jesus and Roman Taxation**

Before we consider the significance of what we are about to read from the Gospel According to Luke, it would do us well to realize that Romans (i.e., *Gentiles*) were the *usurpers* of the government given to the Nation Israel. They were their oppressors and foreign enemies. If any group of people *ever* had an argument for not paying taxes, surely it was the Jews. They were God's nation. A Gentile nation was suppressing them.

Jesus was questioned concerning paying tribute (i.e., taxes) to Caesar.<sup>2</sup> His response can be found

1. Hartzler, p. 7  
2. "The Roman government ... deified Nero, ran a welfare state, and sponsored many pagan practices. Rome certainly did not use its tax money as Christians would desire. The tax-collectors of Jesus' time, who usually were paid no salary but rather became rich by overcharging and cheating people, certainly did not employ fair methods of taxation. Yet Jesus and Paul both spoke very clearly on the subject: the Christian ought to pay his taxes." John Eidsmor, *God & Caesar: Christian Faith & Political Action*, (Westchester, IL:

in all of the synoptic Gospels:

*"Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."* (Luke 20:22-26; c.f. Matthew 22; Mark 12.)

Jesus made a case for the payment of taxes; no exceptions given.

Similarly, we live under, submit to, and enjoy the benefits of a monetary system (however corrupt) whose image and subscription is that of a Gentile (i.e., *heathen*) nation. Shall we refuse to do less than Christ taught?

In fact, Jesus made even a stronger appeal for the payment of taxes in Matthew 17:24-27. In this passage, Jesus completely sets aside any issue of *legal* obligation to pay taxes and teaches that there is a *greater* issue at hand.

*"And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers.*

Crossway, 1984) p. 37.

*Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. NOTWITHSTANDING, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."*

Christ's message was *offensive* enough without adding further offense in *eternally irrelevant issues*. Paul repeats this principle:

*"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God"* (I Corinthians 10:32).

*"Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed"* (II Corinthians 6:3).

C.R. Stam writes concerning the subject of taxation:

"Those who, in our day, complain of corrupt government and assume the prerogative to decide whether or not they should pay taxes should reflect that Paul lived under the wicked Nero and his corrupt administration and *he* bids us to pay our taxes (Romans 13:6,7), and our Lord, also living under pagan Rome, taught His disciples to pay their taxes (Matthew 22:16-21; 17:24-27). This is God's Word on the matter."<sup>3</sup>

## **Paul's Teaching Is for the Body of Christ**

The teachings of Paul are clearly reserved for those who are *outside* the realm of human government. They are instructions for the saints, *not* the world.

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts ..."* (Titus 2:11-12).

3. Cornelius R. Stam, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1981) p. 310.

Grace teaching (i.e., grace motivated living) is *only* taught to the believer! The believer is its *only* recipient! There is not a lost man enrolled in grace's school. The religious system offers only a cheap imitation (c.f., II Timothy 3:5). It tries to reform the conduct of the world; but the world is simply being who they are in Adam: sinners. What they need is the gospel!

Since Paul's instructions are for us, then, how would we apply,

*"For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal**, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"* (II Corinthians 10:3, 4); or,

*"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For **we wrestle not against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against **spiritual** wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:11, 12); or,

*"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head"* (Romans 12:20),

to the situation of war?

Think how contrary these verses are to killing another man in battle. If we kill a man who is lost, we seal his eternal doom. Is this our divine purpose? Should we be involved in the slaughter of the heathen? Is this the role to which God has called us? Or, should we be rescuing them with the "good news?"

Then what if the man that we kill is saved? Are we to take up arms against fellow members of Christ's Body for national "good?" Could such a thing happen? Didn't it happen during the American Civil War? "Brother against brother" not only in the biological sense, but also in the spiritual as well? Serious consideration should be

given to this issue before the believer patriotically heads off to war.

Dager speaks of “those who abhor the thought of Christians being conscripted to serve in one government’s army to kill Christians conscripted into another government’s army.”<sup>4</sup>

Some believers in church history have laid down their lives over this issue. “Maximilian the Martyr, who at Carthage around A.D. 295 accepted death by execution rather than service in the army of Rome, declared, ‘I cannot serve as a soldier; I cannot do evil. I am a Christian.’”<sup>5</sup>

Or, how would we apply the following verse to a political campaign?

*“To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2).*

Or, how would we apply the next verse to a court room?

*“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32.)*

Or, how could you apply this verse to capital punishment?

*“Recompense to no man evil for evil” (Romans 12:17a).*

Or, how could we apply ..., etc. ....?

Are we to compartmentalize our lives into separate areas – sacred life and secular life? Are we to turn “on” and “off” the life of Christ in us? Are we to follow the instructions of our Saviour through Paul only when it is convenient?

Just how could we apply these verses to the contexts that we have suggested? Simply put, I do

4. Albert James Dager, *Vengeance Is Ours*, (Redmond, WA: SwordPublishers, 1990) p. 253.

5. Eidsmor, p. 42.

not see how we can. They will not work! We are to operate in a completely *different* realm!

Should we attempt to “Christianize” human government? Maybe the better question is, *could* we “Christianize” Gentile (*i.e.*, *heathen*) government? Perhaps we should ask those who lived in the fourth century under Constantine; or those who lived in the Dark Ages under Roman Catholicism; or those who lived in John Calvin’s Geneva;<sup>6</sup> or, yes, even those living in the Puritan colony of Massachusetts.<sup>7</sup>

The “*religious right*”<sup>8</sup> are no more the friends of Paul’s gospel than the “*nonreligious left*.<sup>9</sup> Remember that the tree in the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! Beware of human good, as well as human evil!

Lloyd Hartzler remarks that, “the state could not operate effectively by the principles of New Testament ethics. Suppose law officers would attempt to use the ethics of grace in handling thieves, murderers, or rapists.”<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, we might ask, could the believer operate within the system of government by the principles of Pauline truth?

6. For information regarding John Calvin’s Geneva, see *Bible Student’s Notebook*, Issue #22.

7. “The Puritans did not flee religious persecution in settling America but paradoxically established it. The historian Miller rightly declared: ‘The government of Massachusetts, and of Connecticut as well, was a dictatorship, and never pretended to be anything else; it was a dictatorship, not of a single tyrant, or of an economic class, or of a political faction, but of the holy and regenerate.’ He further states, ‘They maintained here precisely what they maintained in England, and if they exiled, fined, jailed, whipped, or hanged those who disagreed with them in New England, they would have done the same thing in England could they have secured the power.’” Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, (Pensacola: Vance Publications, 1991) p. 9.

8. Catholics, Mormons, etc.

9. The religious right is filled with those who are being motivated by *dominion* and *reconstruction* theology. They *appear* to be fighting the good fight, but are you aware of the teachings and goals of those who hold such views? If you were you might be shocked! If those who held these views had control they would *not* be your friend. For a look at these teachings, from the very works of their own leaders, see *Vengeance is Ours* by Albert James Dager.

10. Hartzler, p. 7.

## Kingdoms of This World

Listen to what John Saunders has to say about our *identification* with human government:

“We who are citizens of the U.S.A. live in a nation that has been the least oppressive to its people while offering them the most material blessings ... In fact, our nation and government are so fine that we Christians who live here find no problem identifying totally with our country. And as we reap the material benefits of being citizens here, we cannot help perhaps agreeing with the popular bumper sticker that says, ‘*Thank God Everyday, You live in the USA.*’

“In light of all this, may I ask this question: ‘Should the Christians in the Soviet Union curse God every day they live there?’ If not, why should we think that we are especially favored by God for putting us here?

“In reality American Christians, Russian Christians – all Christians – have been called to live as strangers and aliens even in the lands of our birth (II Corinthians 6:16-18) ...

“When Christians join themselves to the world, even with the best of motives, the testimony of Christ is compromised and the enemy gains a victory (II Corinthians 10:3-4). ... When the enemy can get the Lord’s people to wrestle with flesh and blood, his objective is accomplished, because he has disarmed the church. How foolish we are to lay down our divinely powerful weapons of the Spirit in favor of the puny weapons of mere men. If we take our eyes off of our Head, the Lord Jesus, and put our trust in human institutions and the arm of the flesh, we have lost the battle (even if it seems momentarily that we have won), and what is worse, we have lost our testimony.

“*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*” These are attractive, high-sounding words to be sure, but they do not have one wit of scriptural backing. The unbeliever who penned them certainly did not get his ideas from the Scriptures. That is why he said it was ‘*self-evident*’ – in other words, it sounded like a good idea to him. And from that shaky foundation, we who live in America today are so addicted to our idols of freedom and materialism that we have incorporated them right into the church and our practice of Christianity.

“Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ... may square well with the Christianity practiced by the

Crusaders in the Middle Ages, but it certainly has nothing in common with the kingdom of which our Lord is the King ...

“Don’t get me wrong. I prefer living in a free society to the alternative. But if my lust for freedom blinds me to the kingdoms of this world, then it would be better to live under tyranny than to sell my birthright in Christ for the materialistic licentiousness of democratic capitalism. Living in America makes us love the world, because here, we have the very best of it. Somehow we Christians tell ourselves that *our country, above all others, is ordained by God and is called to be a special nation before Him.* This idea is about as valid as the self-evidency proposition.

“The result of all this is that most of the Christians in America find themselves *identifying* with the world system and, in fact, wedded to it ... (James 4:4). We are called to be strangers and aliens even in the land of our birth.

“Why do we always say ‘*we*’ when referring to our country? God has transported us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of His marvelous light. Yet the largest movement of Christians in America today is to seize control of the government and its vital institutions so that we may ‘*once again*’ have a Christian nation. This nation is about as Christian as a football game at which the spectators sober up for a few moments of silence while some clergyman offers the invocation. What the enemy has been unable to do through centuries of persecution, he has managed to do to the church in America by dissipation.

“I am not at all unaware of the numerous books written about the founding of America and our ‘*special*’ relationship to God and our ‘*holy*’ heritage. The problem is that not one bit of this thinking and rationale can be squared with the Scriptures. Nowhere has the Lord instructed His people to go out and found a nation based upon Bible principles or anything else. The fact that men have done such things in the name of God is no assurance at all that He has desired it any more than He stood with Herod when he ‘*beautified*’ the temple. We Americans don’t understand this because, rooted deep in our hearts, is the delusion that God is ever so grateful to anyone who will launch some high-minded scheme – if they will only proclaim they are doing it in His Name.”<sup>11</sup>

(This is part of a continuing series on Human Government.)

11. John Saunders, *The Tiger Is Dead*, (Memphis: Guardian Books, 1989) pp.74-79. (continued on page 450)

# Adoption of Sons

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME

### Part XVI

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*"That we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:5).*

**T**here is a specific time in an individual's life that officially marks the passing from *immature* childhood to *adult* sonship. It is not society that is to set this marking of adulthood. It is the father who sets this important milestone. Paul calls it "the time appointed of the father" (Galatians 4:2).

Adult sonship is not identified by a person's height, weight, age, or educational accomplishments. It is distinguished only by *maturity*. Today our society uses passage of time (e.g. 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday) or accomplishments (e.g. high school graduation) to mark "adulthood." These are by no means acceptable standards or reliable standards (albeit significant events).

Who should better know when this time has arrived than the father? It is he who is to *release* his heir from childhood. He is the one who must be satisfied of maturity in his children!

This public proclamation of adulthood is known as ...

#### ADOPTION

*"... That we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:5)*

C.R. Stam writes concerning this adoption:

"According to this passage [Galatians 4:1-7], 'adoption' is simply the 'placing as a son' – that is, a grown-up son. This is the definition of the word *huiogenesis* (adoption) as given by Young, Robinson and others ...

"The adoption of children as we speak of it

today generally refers to the taking in and bringing up of other people's children. This is not so of the Bible word *huiogenesis*, for according to Galatians 4:1-7 this 'placing as sons' affected those *already* children. This is not to imply, of course, that a stranger could not also be taken in and given a place as a full-grown son, but the point is the Bible 'adoption' does not refer to mere acceptance into the family, but to a declaration of full sonship, with all its rights and privileges.

"In the life of the Hebrew boy there came a time, appointed of the father, when 'adoption' proceedings took place and the boy was *declared* to be the [adult] son and [fully authorized] heir of [all that] the father [had].

"Before that time he had been a son, indeed, but '*under tutors and governors*.' He had been told what he must and must not, when he may and may not do. In this he differed nothing from a servant.

"But finally the 'time appointed' arrives. He is a grown son now. It is assumed that he will no longer need overseers to keep him in check. There will be natural understanding and operation between father and son. And so the 'adoption' proceedings take place – a declaration that the son now enters into all the rights and privileges of full sonship.

"Such is the meaning of the word *adoption* as it is used in the writings of Paul."<sup>1</sup>

Lehman Strauss agreeing writes that adoption is

1. C.R. Stam, *Sonship* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1985) p. 5, 6.

when one “is placed in the position of a full-grown son.”<sup>2</sup>

Merrill C. Tenney also supplies this definition for adoption – “the public recognition of a son by his father when he promotes him to full heirship.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Lehman Strauss, *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957, 1981) p. 56.
3. Merrill C. Tenney, *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950, 1975) p. 128.

C.I. Scofield states: “Adoption (huiogenesis, ‘placing as a son’) is not so much a word of *relationship* as of *position* ... Adoption is the act ... whereby one already a child is ... placed in the position of an adult son.”<sup>4</sup>

(This is part of a continuing series on the Home)

4. C.I. Scofield (Editor), *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1909, 1917) p. 1250.

## Substitution

Θ Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head!  
Our load was laid on Thee;  
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead,  
Didst bear all ill for me.  
A Victim led, Thy blood was shed;  
Now there's no load for me.

Death and the curse were in our cup—  
Θ Christ, ‘twas for Thee,  
Thou hast drained the last drop—  
‘Tis empty now for me.  
That bitter cup—Love drank it up;  
Now blessings' draught for me.

Jehovah lifted up His rod—  
Θ Christ, it fell on Thee!  
Thou wast sore stricken of Thy God;  
There's not one stroke for me.  
Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred;  
Now cloudless peace for me.

For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,  
And I have died in Thee;  
Thou'rt risen: my bands are all untied,  
And now Thou liv'st in me.  
Now purified and justified,  
Thy Glory now for me!

Ira D. Sankey

## Soldier's Prayer

From prayer that asks that I may be  
Sheltered from winds that  
beat on Thee,  
From fearing when I should aspire,  
From faltering when I  
should climb higher,  
From silken self, O Captain, free  
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,  
From easy choices, weakenings,  
(Not thus are spirits fortified,  
Not this way went the Crucified)  
From all that dims Thy Calvary,  
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,  
The faith that nothing can dismay,  
The hope no disappointments tire,  
The passion that will burn like fire,  
Let me not sink to be a clod:  
Make me Thy Fuel, Flame of God.

Amy Carmichael

# Be Likeminded

by – Daniel Andersen (edited and abridged)

Note from the editor:

In this publication, I open my heart to thoughts and feelings that have been reached after years of Bible study. Years ago I was a zealous and dogmatic supporter of a certain line of “fundamentalist thinking” and could react with some indignation to those who differed with me. For in differing with me, my feeling was that they were in opposition to God’s truth!

I have realized the limitations and fallibilities of the thinking and reasoning processes of all human beings in general and of myself in particular. I have realized the power and grip of paradigms or patterns of thought over our thinking and how they limit and circumscribe not only our thoughts and views, but the very questions we ask and how we seek their answers. Perhaps the best and truest patterns or paradigms of thought or summaries of doctrines on biblical subjects have yet to be developed. I have written more fully about these in *Bible Study – A Personal Quest* (Available from StudyShelf.com, PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963, 1-800-784-6010)

## Be Likeminded One to Another

“Be of the same **mind** one toward another”  
(Romans 12:16a).

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be **likeminded** one b another according to Christ Jesus” (Romans 15:5).

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, **be of one mind**, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (II Corinthians 13:11).

“Fulfil ye my joy, **that ye be likeminded**, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they **be of the same mind** in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2).

These Scripture passages all share a common thought: Paul’s exhortation to “be of the same mind,” or “be likeminded,” or “be of one mind.” Each of these phrases uses the Greek verb *phroneo*.<sup>1</sup> We may well wonder just what Paul

1. Strong’s #5426. *phroneo*, fron-eh'-o; from G5424; to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by impl. to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intens. to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience):--set the affection on, (be) care

has in mind in these and similar passages. They apparently make a strong appeal for uniformity, but what kind of uniformity? Does Paul wish everyone to think the same things and in the same way? Is he exhorting believers to subscribe to a uniform set of *articles of faith*, to produce what we might call a *doctrinal accord*? Is it an appeal to embrace a codified set of statements, an early form of *orthodoxy*?

## Steward of the Mysteries of God

I’ll confess that for many years this is just what I thought Paul was urging. After all, he was steward of the most profound “secrets of God,” one who was an apostle (a commissioned one) of Christ Jesus. He could speak on behalf of Christ. Could he not urge upon all God’s people a unanimity of doctrine? Could he not call upon all believers in Christ to submit to a divinely produced creed, to accept an authoritative summary of the essential points that constitute the Christian faith?

For the sake of discussion, let’s assume that this is what Paul had in mind, that he was exhorting to unanimity of thought in regard to those things “most surely to be believed.” If he sought such accord in his day when he ministered Christ, what about our day, almost 2,000 years later? We do not have Paul

(-ful), (be like-, + be of one, + be of the same, + let this) mind  
(-ed, regard, savour, think).

(or any other apostle) in our midst to dispense to us these *essential points of the Christian faith*. We don't have anyone divinely commissioned to directly give us a doctrinal summary of God's truth – but we have Paul's writings; so it behooves us to study, to search, to seek to understand and properly interpret these writings.

Would that this were sufficient to produce a unanimity, a oneness, an accord among all believers in Christ! Sad to say, Christendom is characterized by factiousness, fragmentation, and divisiveness rather than by agreement, accord, and unanimity. Shall we strive to attain a common set of doctrines, to agree on a particular set of Biblical articles of faith, to reach one mind and be of total accord? If so, whose mind shall it be? Mine, yours, or someone else's? What set of doctrines shall all commonly embrace? Mine, yours, or someone else's?

## The Legacy of Orthodoxy

Dogmatic adherence to a particular *creed* or *confession* as the basis for unity will produce unity only for the adherents to that particular system. This, in practice, appears to be about the only basis for unity that is generally recognized. We suffer from what I call the "legacy of orthodoxy," the idea that one must submit to a particular set of dogmatically proclaimed *orthodox* beliefs to be a Christian, or to be a member of some church, or to have fellowship with other Christians. We observe dogmatism in so many human enterprises – in philosophy, in religion, in politics.

It appears to be a universal human trait to be zealously engaged in supporting dogmatically held ideas. In world affairs we see the results of such dogmatism: fanatical zeal in the support of a particular cause. So often it leads to more than fragmentation and division; it leads to bloodshed. Paul himself knew intimately what such zealousness could produce. It was a trait which once characterized himself, but which he ultimately discarded, casting it upon the refuse heap of worthless works of the flesh.

It appears totally impossible for Christians to experience a real unity if it is to be based upon a set of articles of faith or system of doctrines. If this is what Paul was urging, we'd have to say it may have been possible in his day, but it is certainly not possible in our day. Many seek to rise above petty differences and say that they will have fellowship with any who simply agree on the *fundamentals*.<sup>2</sup>

A petty difference might be whether grape juice or

2. [Editor: How is it determined just *what* are the *fundamentals*; what is petty or essential? And just *who* determines it?]

wine should be used in the communion service, or whether water baptism should be observed by immersion or by sprinkling. What about communion and water baptism themselves? Are they in the list of *fundamentals*? There are sincere believers in Christ who do not observe these ceremonies and do not consider them as in the will of God for His people today. Would all who hold various points of view on these matters have fellowship with those who differ with them?

## What Basis for Accord?

Some will reply, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Yes, but agreed on what? A topic or activity of mutual interest can bring harmony and agreement between people of the greatest diversity of views. That's why people form clubs and associations of all kinds. Have you noticed how friendly people are in a campground, visiting and sharing experiences? Or in a hiking club or biking club or health club, etc.? People from tremendously different points of view on many things can get along in great harmony when sharing something of common interest.

So what should be the basis for harmony, for agreement among believers in Christ? Should it be concepts of the Godhead, some of the most complex and subtle theological doctrines that have ever been developed? What if a person, by diligent, honest searching and study, finds it necessary to change views? Is this one now to be expelled from fellowship? Even from that of one's own family?

Isn't this just what we observe in Christendom? There is a proliferation of groups, denominations, sects, large and small, some respected and venerated, some of long standing and some of recent origin. They are organized around some doctrinal basis, *creed* or *confession*. The concepts of *orthodoxy* and *heresy* become a matter of concern; but these are not easy to define, and they vary in range and scope.

How many reach their ideas of what is *orthodox* by their own personal diligent study of the Bible and coming to their own private conclusions? Very few, I'm sure. Most simply *subscribe* to a system that, for one reason or another, they are persuaded is *orthodox*. It could be argued that it would be impossible for everyone to reach the *orthodox faith* if left to seek and study and find it for themselves. I agree; and for precisely that reason we ought to dismiss the concept of *orthodoxy* and find a totally different basis for fellowship than agreement on a set of doctrines or a *creed* or a *confession*.

(This is part I of a four part series)

# *The Christ Filter:* Sinner? or Saint?

by – David C. Needham

## **The Contemporary Teaching**

Let's see if we can get a composite picture of the **common, contemporary** teaching on the spiritual life. To do this, let's imagine God in all His absolute holiness at the very top of the picture. Then down at the bottom, let's place me, a *SINNER*. Because I have received Christ, God has performed a remarkable thing. Since He obviously cannot associate with sinners – light cannot fellowship with darkness – He has inserted a miraculous filter between Himself and me, the sinner. That filter is Jesus. His death, His resurrection. Therefore, as God looks down on me, He doesn't see me as I really am, but rather He sees all that is right about Jesus. Because of that wonderful filter God's record against me is wiped out. Everything I was and am, a sinner who sins, is completely erased. And further, everything that Jesus is has been written in place of that record. I am justified. I am "positionally" righteous. I am judicially righteous. This is the way God sees me. But if for a moment – horrible thought – that filter were not there and He saw me as I really am, He would call me what I am, a *SINNER*.

But God has [continuing with this common, contemporary view] done two other things. First, He has sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Someone called alongside to help me, teach me, give me power. And secondly, God has given me a new nature. Therefore, though I am essentially a sinner, I do have a fresh capacity. So what am I? I am a *SINNER* with a new nature and the Holy Spirit.

## **The Tragic Flaw**

Praise God there is some solid truth in that

picture. It is true that all my sins, past, present, and future, have been paid for by Jesus' death. They are nowhere to be found in God's records concerning me. And, praise God, I rest in the fact that there has been no dubious "book juggling" to bring this about. As an objective fact, all of Christ's righteousness has been correctly credited to my account.

But there is one more serious error – a tragic flaw. An error that pervades dozens of popular books on the Christian life. I wish I could shout these next lines around the world! A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. Mark this B a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a *SAINT* ... Not only positionally (true in the mind of God but not true in actuality here on earth), not only judicially (a matter of God's moral bookkeeping), but *ACTUALLY*.

Becoming a Christian is not just getting something, no matter how wonderful that something may be.

It is becoming someone.

## **Only Saints Go To Heaven**

Perhaps you are saying, "I thought that's what everyone believed." Most emphatically, it is *not* what everyone believes. In the deepest sense of personhood, if you have received [i.e., trusted] Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are not a sinner. You are righteous... Forgiven sinners can never go to heaven; they would only dirty up the place. Only saints can go to heaven and you are a *SAINT* ...

## You Are Not The Same

Perhaps this “new personhood” idea seems far away from the daily reality of your life. That still doesn’t change the basic fact: if you have received the Savior, you simply are *not* the same person you were before. When you were “in the flesh” (Romans 8:9), life and meaning for you had to be found right there – and there alone. Your brain, your emotions, your senses, your creativity, your glands, your world environments, your relationships – this was life. It could be found nowhere else.

But … this is not so anymore, whether you know it or not! You may weigh the same, look the same, feel the same, BUT you are not the same.

### Don’t Water It Down

That’s radical. Terribly radical. Don’t water it down! How could you water it down?

By saying: “Yes, I know I have a new nature. He has ‘clothed me with righteousness!’” What you have isn’t the point. It’s who you are that’s the issue.

By saying: “Oh, I’m just a sinner saved by grace. I’m just a sinner indwelt by the Holy Spirit” – that’s watering it down. That’s casting an undeserved shadow on the greatest miracle God has ever performed concerning you. Don’t do it …

God says “*We are His [God’s] workmanship created in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:10). Does God create something dirty? Is God’s workmanship – His masterpiece – simply adding a little spiritual lump onto sinful clay? Let’s let Paul answer that question: “*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 5:17).

*Birthright* (pages 46-51, abridged)

(continued from page 450)

additional Bibles and study materials to the Philippines. We have already received good reports concerning that effort.

As this editorial is being written another shipment, even larger this time, is being prepared for the postal “M” bags.

### Bookstore

We have just finished our second year with the local bookstore. We have been told that it normally takes about five years to get established: so, we’re two-fifths of the way! Maybe we can make it.

We have a paper we mail out occasionally to our customers. We call it “The Amherst Bookshelf” and it is currently sent to about 1,000 folks. It is the same size and layout style as the BSN. We carry information about the store, specials, and Bible study/book reviews. We have mailed six issues to date. We are always particularly eager to see if we will receive any response from the “studies.” Our last issue ran a review of *The Silence of God* by Sir Robert Anderson. We carried the same three-page excerpt that ran in BSN #16. It is a tremendous work.

We were very pleased with the amount of response that we received from the article. Many spoke of how much they enjoyed it and the benefit that they received from it. A number of customers even purchased the book!

### Radio

Many have asked about the availability of tapes from our radio show. So, we have taped one of our Sunday morning shows, which is called “Sunday in the South, with Clyde & Clyde.” There are three one-hour tapes filled with Southern, Country and Bluegrass gospel music. These are not “professional” tapes, just copies of our broadcast. They are not offered for sale, but we would gladly send you a set; all we ask is that you consider sending enough to cover the tapes and the cost of mailing them to you, as this could get quite expensive if we receive very many requests.

### Visiting Saints

Over the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years period, the saints here in Central Virginia enjoyed many saints visiting with us. This means a lot to us. Why not plan to visit with us sometime soon? Plan to bring the whole family and stay for a while!



Clyde Pilkington  
1/99