



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 52

### *Justification and the Confession of Sin*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also **justified**: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the **charge** of God’s elect? It is God that **justifieth**. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”*

*(Romans 8:29-34).*

**T**hese verses are particularly beautiful to the believer. Among the many blessed doctrines dealt with in this passage is Paul’s foundational doctrine of justification. Before we can truly understand any of the rest of Pauline doctrine, or find out anything else about our glorious position, we must have a firm grasp of this subject of justification.

The primary problem that mankind must face is that we have been charged with the violation of the holiness and righteousness of God. When one is charged with something it does not necessarily mean that one is guilty. There are two basic possible results of being charged with a crime and having judgement passed. You could be condemned. Condemnation is the judicial act of declaring one guilty and sentencing him to punishment. The proposed offender is brought into the courtroom and a document is presented with the charges. After evidence has been introduced then the decision of guilt is handed down and sentence of punishment is issued forth.

The defendant (or accused) may also be acquitted. Acquittal is the judicial act of declaring one innocent of the crimes with which one has been charged. As before, the accused is brought in and the charges are presented along with evidence. But the decision that is handed down is the one of “not guilty.”

As for mankind, we have been indicted with sin and the evidence is ample, we are indisputably “guilty as charged.” Look at God’s decree:

*“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the*

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## Dear Saints:

Greetings in our wonderful Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We want to thank those of you who have responded to the last issue of the Bible Student's Notebook™. We have had quite a few heartfelt responses to the articles carried in it. We appreciate the encouragement you have been to us. It means a lot that others are touched by many of the same truths that stir in our hearts. Some have conveyed that issue #51 was the best BSN ever. The article that received the most comments was The Divine Viewpoint in our Relationships.

The next issue of the BSN will begin a new set of articles related to the church. These articles will convey our current understanding, from the Scriptures, as to God's present purpose with us, as His church. We are greatly looking forward to getting these articles into your hands.

## Book Projects

There has been repeated interest in taking some of the series articles that have run in the BSN and putting them into book form. Articles on the home, human government, and the church have been of particular interest. We have even received spontaneous gifts toward this goal. Please pray with us concerning wisdom for this project.

Yours in Him Who is Faithful and True,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

## 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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*(recompiled and edited)*

law: “**that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:19, 23).

Now there is another option in this picture; if you have been found guilty and sentence has been passed (condemnation), you could be subject to the availability of a pardon. Pardon too is a judicial term and decree. Pardon is a synonym of forgiveness, *i.e.*, the cancellation of a punishment incurred through the conviction of a crime. You could be forgiven for your crime. It is very important to understand that you cannot be forgiven until you are guilty. You have to be guilty to be forgiven. Your pardon is your release from the liability to suffer the punishment of your crime.

We thank God that we have been forgiven! But the gospel is much more than that! We have also been justified, and justification is something far greater than pardon. This forgiveness and justification is all because of the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us get a picture from God’s viewpoint of what it means to be justified in Jesus Christ.

When you are charged with an offense, you are either guilty or innocent. If you are innocent, then you have been cleared from all charges against you; but if you are found guilty you are condemned. Your only hope is that you will find mercy from someone who has the authority to issue forth a pardon decree.

Before proceeding, it is important to have this courtroom scenario in our minds. In the courtroom, you have a judge who is in charge and ultimately makes all decisions. In the courtroom of the universe, the courtroom of divine justice, it is the Almighty God of heaven and earth who is the enthroned and honorable judge. Look at the following references:

“*Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead*” (Acts 17:31).

“*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;*” (II Timothy 4:1; c.f. Genesis 18:25; Psalm 9:7; 44:21; 50:6; 75:7; 96:13; I Peter 4:5; Hebrews 12:23).

But in the courtroom you also have a standard of judgement. There is no offense without a standard. It is God’s Word that is the standard by which the divine courtroom of the universe will proceed:

“*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*” (Romans 2:16).

“*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*” (John 12:48).

According to Romans 3:19, the righteous law of God clearly demonstrates beyond any doubt whatsoever that man is guilty before the Almighty God.

“*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*”

Paul continues:

“*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (:20).

Isn’t it amazing that people try to use the standard of the law to prove or obtain their own personal innocence? Yet the standard of the law can only condemn us. Look at :25 and 26:

“*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”

How is it that men are saved? How is salvation obtained? It is important to understand that the believer will not have to face the sentence of sin, but why is this true?

God can only do that which is right and just, so God designed a plan whereby He would satisfy His righteous justice. But if you listened to many presentations of the gospel, they would totally leave out this issue. It is often said, "God loves you and wants to forgive your sin." Yet that is not all of the gospel. As a matter of fact, the "gospel" has been left out of that "gospel."

The grounds of the gospel is Jesus Christ Himself. The gospel is that *JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR YOUR SINS, WAS BURIED AND ON THE THIRD DAY AROSE* (c.f. I Corinthians 15:1-3). God does not just have pity on us when we sin. God does not look down and say, "I feel sorry for you and love you, so let's just forget about your sin. I'll just skip it. I'll overlook it." No, in no wise.

The fact is that the righteous judge of the universe cannot overlook sin. He is not only a loving God, He is also a righteous God. God can never sacrifice one of His attributes for another. God's righteousness demands perfection, and so Romans 3:26 tells us that God had a plan that He might be just and the justifier.

By His plan He would be just in the forgiveness of sin and (thank God for that "and") the justifier. Wonderful, good news! Let's look at justification for a moment and then we will come back to it again later. The root word of justify is "just," meaning righteous. The suffix "ify" means to make. Thus the word "justify" means to "make just" or "make righteous." God's plan was to work salvation in such a way that it would be legal (*i.e.*, that it would not violate the righteousness of God Himself). The gospel that many present is actually an illegal (illegitimate) "gospel." It does not satisfy the righteous judgement of God. In the process it also violates His lofty holiness.

God's plan of redemption, through Christ's finished cross work, was one that allowed God Almighty to remain just while becoming our justifier. He is the

one who is making men righteous. We desperately need to understand that according to God's plan of salvation, someone has to make us righteous. That someone can only be God. If you are saved it is only because the omnipotent God of all creation was willing and able to "be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

## CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS IN THE GOSPELS

Man has not always enjoyed these truths that have been revealed to and through Paul, the apostle. Under God's kingdom program with Israel, forgiveness was conditional. Look at the so-called "Lord's Prayer" for instance:

*"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."* (Matthew 6:9-13).

A lot could be said about the kingdom nature of this prayer. Let us focus on the aspect of divine forgiveness. What was its standard? His answer is quite clear; "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Christ gave them this prayer that they would seek divine forgiveness based on their own forgiveness of others. Just in case they did not understand this standard he expounded upon it. Isn't it interesting, out of all the issues that could have been expounded on in this prayer, that Christ only gave a commentary on one? That was the issue of forgiveness. Look at the next verses:

*"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:14, 15).

The prayer and commentary are clear. Forgiveness was conditional. How thankful I am that this is not the gospel that the risen, ascended Lord Jesus

Christ committed to Paul (i.e., Paul's gospel)!

Now let's look at Christ's teaching in Matthew chapter eighteen concerning this same subject:

*"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took [him] by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (23-35).*

Now, please get this picture. The issue here is man's forgiveness under the kingdom. Here a man with his sins forgiven did not forgive others, and as a result had his own sins re-imputed. We don't understand this because our forgiveness is based upon Pauline truth, but this is the Kingdom of Heaven teaching of Jesus Christ during His

earthly ministry with Israel (c.f. Romans 15:8).

## CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS IN I JOHN

Now, consider the basis of forgiveness as found in the first epistle of John. This too is concerning the issue of Israel's Kingdom of Heaven. It was written by John, an apostle of the circumcision.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).*

Here comes their decree ... "If we confess ..." If Israel wants their sins forgiven they must confess, but confess what? They had to confess their sins. Now, that's conditional forgiveness. It's also the inspired Word of God. Was this new revelation for John? No, look back in Proverbs 28 and see that it was a part of the requirement for mercy under the Old Covenant:

*"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (13).*

If one was to confess and forsake, he could obtain mercy. In Psalm 32 we see that this is how Israel maintained their covenant with God. The Jew was born into covenant relationship with God, but he was responsible for keeping that covenant relationship. Notice what David said:

*"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (5).*

So John was teaching nothing more, concerning the requirements of forgiveness, than what David understood. But we must ask ourselves, "Is Paul's gospel defined such, that if a man will confess his sins and forsake them that God will have mercy and forgive him?" The answer we give should be a resounding "NO!" There is no such teaching to be found in his epistles.

Although our subjects in this article are limited to "confession and justification" it is interesting to

note that in John's passage there is also conditional fellowship.

*"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."* (I John 1:7).

Fellowship with God was based on walking "in the light." But in the context, this is Israel's prophetic fellowship. For John said what he was teaching concerning this fellowship was "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ..." (vs.3). Where had John "seen and heard" this message of fellowship? According to the first two verses, he heard it from Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8). Now that makes His message in accordance with prophecy (i.e., "the promises made unto the fathers" – Israel's fathers!). So, what we have in I John is a fellowship of prophecy.

Paul, however, taught the "fellowship of the mystery." He taught a fellowship apart from any condition. It is fellowship that is based on the person and work of God the Son alone! Thank God for the fellowship of Ephesians three!

*"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 3:9).

We, as members of the Body of Christ, have a mystery fellowship with God. And we are never "out of fellowship." In this we do not boast of ourselves, but of the one in whom we have our eternal, unchangeable fellowship – the Lord Jesus Christ! And this fellowship fits right into our subject of justification. Indeed, it is justification that gave us the standing of fellowship.

## **GOD HAS MADE PROVISION FOR YOUR SIN**

For the believer to be justified, God had to deal with the issue of sin. God cannot charge and

sentence (condemn) mankind and then become lenient with him. This would not be justice!

Let us illustrate the point. A horrifying murder is committed in your neighborhood. The murderer is caught in the act. He lives in a nearby community. He is tried for murder and found guilty. All of the evidence clearly demonstrates, without question, his guilt. On the day of sentencing the convict makes a full confession. He weeps and conveys his sorrow for the crime. He pleads for mercy and pledges to never kill again. To the shock of your community, the judge issues forth a suspended sentence. The man is free and now walks the streets again. What would the response of your community be? Would the judge be hailed as a man of great compassion and love? Hardly! There would be an outcry. Why? Because there had been a miscarriage of justice. The predominant character we want in judges is that they are *just*.

This is true of the nature of God. First and foremost the God of all creation is HOLY and JUST.

*"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*  
(Genesis 18:25b).

God cannot simply say "You are guilty, but because of my love I will be lenient with you – I'll overlook your sin." NO! Instead, God has DEALT with the issue of sin. He sent His Son, the eternal and righteous Lord Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient payment for sin. Where was this payment made? On the altar of Calvary's cross.

God was *fully* satisfied with the results of the cross-work of His Son.

*"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be **satisfied**"* (Isaiah 53:11).

Paul reaffirms this great truth.

*"Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** ..."*

Propitiation means *SATISFACTION!* Paul declares this *satisfactory* work for us when he writes:

*“In Whom [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of SINS, according to the riches of His grace”*  
(Ephesians 1:7).

What is it that we have? The forgiveness of sins! Where does Paul say that we have forgiveness of sins?

In confession? NO!  
In forgiving others? NO!  
In forsaking our sins? NO!  
In repentance of our sins? NO!

We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins *through His blood!* Notice carefully that the verse says *“In WHOM we HAVE redemption.”* This is a present possession!

Is TOTAL FORGIVENESS according to the way we forgive others? NO! It is ACCORDING to the RICHES OF HIS GRACE! Is it any wonder that Paul praises the GRACE OF GOD?

*“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6).

Paul GLORIED in the CROSS WORK OF CHRIST.

*“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”* (Galatians 6:14).

*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”* (Colossians 2:13).

Some saints have difficulty grasping the truth that *all* their sins are forgiven (past, present and future). They believe that somehow God has forgiven all their past sins, but they are responsible for their sins from now on. What a sad plight. This would mean that God only dealt with the symptoms and not the cause of our problems. You see, we sin because we are sinners. Hence God did not just

deal with the symptoms (our sins) of our condition at Calvary: rather, He went to the root (our nature) of the problem.

Notice what Paul said in the two preceding verses:

*“In Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:11-12).

God accomplished this by the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4. Through this (non-water, non-ceremonial) baptism we are placed into living union with Christ and are identified with Him in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. In so doing we were removed from “the body of the sins of the flesh.” Just what were the results of this?

*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross”* (Colossians 2:13-14).

He took the body of the sins of our flesh and hung it there on the cross with the Lord Jesus Christ, AND He took the ordinances that were against us *out of the way!* Every sin I ever have committed and ever would commit was in the future. At Calvary none of my sins were in the past.

In Acts 13 we find the first recorded message by Paul. Note carefully what he preached:

*“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:38-39).

If we could get believers to see the full truth of this passage today, we could really see progress in spiritual life. We not only have the forgiveness of sins ... we have justification. We have not just been *cleared of ALL our sins ... not just forgiven!* We have been declared righteous! God has imputed to us *righteousness – His RIGHTEOUSNESS!*

*“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21).*

Do you know what happened in the courtroom of God? Because of the complete cross work of Christ we were not simply acquitted: no, it was much more! We were justified. We were *made* righteous. Not just some substandard righteousness: we have been made *THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!* Just how righteous is God? 100%! We were made *that* righteousness!

We are in a STATE of righteousness. Justification is based on the work of Jesus Christ; it is based on His blood. Read Romans 3:28 and notice something.

*“Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith.”*

Do you know how a man is justified? By believing God – by “faith;” but it is more than that. The Protestant cry is “justification by faith” and that is great, but that could be misunderstood, because Pauline justification is *more* than justification by faith. In :24 we are “*being justified freely by His grace.*”

Justification is bestowed by God upon the PRINCIPLE OF GRACE and is received by man upon the PRINCIPLE OF FAITH.

What does all this mean? Well, if you’re looking for a courtroom appearance before God, it has already taken place! It happened at Calvary when YOU appeared before God. You *did* appear before God – IN CHRIST! Now the believer will never have to appear before the *punitive judgement* of God.

Practically, down here on earth, we may have actions that are not righteous. Nonetheless we ourselves – before God – have the righteousness of the Almighty God. Now, let me ask you something: If you have the righteousness of Almighty God, can anyone write anything on your “slate?” Can *anything* be charged to your account? NO! ABSOLUTELY NOT!

Many believers think that they must go before God and have their “slates” cleaned. They feel that they have a need to obtain daily forgiveness. However, all our forgiveness is already in the past. When He forgave us, He also justified us. Do you know what you would first need to be able to receive forgiveness? You must first be condemned. You must first be found guilty and judgement must be passed upon you before anybody can forgive you. You have to be guilty, and the fact is, dear saint, you are not guilty anymore. This is why he says in Romans 8:33:

*“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”*

Can you understand that you are dealing with two things that stand in absolute contrast and can never work anymore? You have been declared righteous by divine decree of God. Who can ever accuse and bring against you anything in the court of God?

Let us go back to I John 1:9-10:

*“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”*

Now here is someone who has to keep their forgiveness caught up. Look at 2:1. Here is a key:

*“My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not and if any man sin we have an ADVOCATE with the Father.”*

What is an advocate? It’s an attorney. It’s a defense attorney. Why would a man who is declared righteous by Almighty God need a defense attorney? An attorney in a courtroom? Why would he need to be defended against charges when the

court has already declared him righteous? That word advocate is a noun; it means a counselor at law. That's Jesus Christ. One of His functions for Israel is that of a "Counselor" (Isaiah 9:6).

Vines' definition of advocate is: "used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, a council for defense, an advocate."

Bullinger's definition is: "a pleader who comes forward in favor and as a representative of another."

Webster's definition is: "primary use: one who pleads the cause of another in a courtroom of civil law."

Not one time does Paul ever use this noun to describe the work of the Lord Jesus for a member of the Body of Christ. Not only that, Paul never gives a condition for the forgiveness of sins. Paul never asks for, mentions or discusses with the believer his need to confess his sins.

There's a song that really doesn't portray the doctrine of Paul very well, but it does carry a good

point. It is about a believer praying for forgiveness of sins. In the song God replies to the believer by saying, "What sins are you talking about? I don't remember them anymore!"

We need to understand that as believers in Jesus Christ, we will never face that courtroom scenario because we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. Jesus Christ will never be tried in this courtroom, nor will we, the body of Christ. We have our standing in Him. Israel's saints were always laboring to enter into that rest. Hebrews said that they hadn't arrived there yet; but there is a rest waiting for them.

Romans 4:5 says: "*but to him that worketh not ...*" What is it you are doing when you are not working? You are resting! God has already given us our rest. We have already arrived as far as our position in Christ is concerned. We are all we will ever be positionally in Jesus Christ. We are *COMPLETE IN HIM!* Rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

■

# *Body Building*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF EDIFICATION

### Part VI

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

#### ROMANS 14

PRINCIPLE #5: Peace (:19)

PRINCIPLE #6: Limited Liberty (:20-21)

*"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another" (14:19).*

#### ***follow after***

Strong: (#1377) "to pursue"

Newell: "a strong word, generally used for

persecute, follow hard after, as in hunting. Compare chapter 12:13b 'given to hospitality,' Philippians 3:14 'I press toward the mark.'"<sup>1</sup>

"The word follow means to fervently pursue and to press toward. Thus we see that this is not to be construed as passive but active participation. As believers, we are to make this our goal in life. Remember in 12:18 we are told: 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'"<sup>2</sup>

1. Newell, p. 514.

2. Rhodes, p. 315.

“Follow, a word expressing eager pursuit. The meaning is, ‘Let us be chiefly intent on the peace and edification of the church.’”<sup>3</sup>

### **peace**

Strong: (#1515) This word is also translated “quietness.”

Some English synonyms for “peace”: accord, calm, harmony.

Some English antonyms for “peace”: agitation, combat, commotion, conflict.

### **edify**

See definition of edify in the introduction.

“The word edify is used as an architectural term which means to build up, to construct or to confirm. What a blessing it would be if all Christians made up their minds that they would carry on no conversation but that which would build up and edify the hearer.”<sup>4</sup>

c.f. I Corinthians 10:23

## PRINCIPLE #6: LIMITED LIBERTY

*“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence” (14:20).*

### **destroy**

Strong: (#2647) “to loosen down (disintegrate), i.e., (by impl.) to demolish.”

Bultema: “Overthrow, dissolve; it is the exact antonym of edify.”

Plumer: “Dissolve, overthrow, bring to naught, throw down.”

### **work of God**

The believer here is called “the work of God.” How important this makes the life of every believer.

“*For we are His workmanship*” (Ephesians 2:10; c.f. Philippians 1:6).

“When we tear down a weaker brother, we are practically throwing down the work of God in that brother.”<sup>5</sup>

### **offence**

See definition for stumblingblock in :13.

“This is something quite different from ‘giving offence’ in the modern sense.”<sup>6</sup>

*“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (14:21).*

### **stumbleth**

Strong: (#4350) “trip up.”

### **offended**

Strong: (#4624) “to entrap.”

### **made weak**

See the definition of weak in :1.

“During the war, when vessels had to be conveyed across the Atlantic because of the U-boat menace, all vessels had to adjust their speed to that of the slowest. This is the idea Paul is driving home here. Sure, the strong brother could stride ahead, but love will not permit it. The shepherd must pace the flock to accomodate the weakest lamb. The Christian must regulate his freedom to take into consideration the feeble conscience of the weakest. To do otherwise is to ‘loosen down’ the work of God and to endanger the spiritual

3. William S. Plumer, Commentary on Romans, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), pp. 614.

4. Rhodes, p. 315.

5. Bultema, p. 161.

6. Bruce, p. 253.

well-being of the weak who, indeed, should be the special concern of the strong.”<sup>7</sup>

“‘Wait for me!’ did not your childhood’s brother often call out to you? So let us ‘wait for one another’ in the spiritual life! Be conformed to his weakness for the present, and accommodate your walk to his, lest he remain weak.”<sup>8</sup>

“So completely emancipated was he [Paul] from spiritual bondage that he was not even in bondage to his emancipation.”<sup>9</sup>

7. Phillips, p. 242.

8. Newell, p. 515.

9. F.F. Bruce, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, The

“It is possible for us to get things so astray in our thoughts that when we see a feeble brother we say, ‘See, here is a weak one! Let us give him a push and see if he will fall over.’ He does fall, poor fellow. Then we say, ‘We always thought he would. Now you see he is no good, and we are well rid of him.’”<sup>10</sup>

c.f. I Corinthians 9:19; Galatians 5:13.

(This is part of a continuing series on Edification).

Epsitle of Paul to the Romans, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) p. 243.

10. Hole, p. 52.

# Learning from Our Weaknesses

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust”*

(Psalm 103:14; Additional Reading: I Corinthians 1:26-31)

**T**he world, and often the believer right along with it, looks to and for greatness, prestige, prominence, honor, and reputation. God looks to and uses foolish, weak, base, and despised things.

It is as weak earthen vessels (II Corinthians 4:7-18) that God teaches us valuable lessons in preparation for our eternal position with Christ in the Heavencies.

## I. We Learn of Calvary’s Love

- A. The when of it – Romans 5:8
- B. The extent of it – Ephesians 2:1-5 (1:6)
- C. The endurance of it – Romans 8:35-39

## II. We Learn That It Must Be Him (and NOT Us)

He removes all other supposed sources of strength (ourselves & others) – Galatians 3:3; Romans 7:18.

We learn that we are the workmanship of God (Ephesians 2:8-10) and He will accomplish His work (Philippians 1:6; 2:13).

## III. We Learn of the All-Sufficiency of His Ability

II Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 4:13

## IV. We Learn Patience

Romans 5:1-5; It helps us to be patient when we remember that we are His workmanship. This all takes time. We are able to be patient with ourselves and with others. Our brothers and sisters are the workmanship of God as well. What a difference that understanding can make!

## V. We Learn Reception

Romans 15:7 (We do not set our brothers aside C 14:10)

## VI. We Learn Forgiveness

We learn what true forgiveness is all about. Those who cannot forgive others have never been able to “forgive” themselves. That is, they have never truly understood or appreciated Divine forgiveness. They live in guilt. They have themselves under the law.

Ephesians 4:31,32; Colossians 3:12-14

## VII. We Learn to Forget

Philippians 3:13, 14. We cannot “go forward” “in the past.” ■

A Selection of  
*The Last Words of the Dying*  
(Part VIII)

WASHINGTON, GEORGE

“Doctor, I have been dying a long time; my breath cannot last long – but I am not afraid to die.”

(Last Words of Saints and Sinners by Herbert Lockyer p. 97)

WATTS, ISAAC (English hymn-writer; “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”)

“It is a great mercy that I have no manner of fear or dread of death. I could, if God pleased, lay my head back and die without terror this afternoon.”

(Last Words of Saints and Sinners by Herbert Lockyer p. 124)

YOUNG, DINSDALE (London preacher)

“I triumph!”

ZUNIGER (Professor of Medicine at Basel)

“I rejoice, yea, my spirit leaps within me for joy, that now the time is come when I shall see the glorious God face to face; whom I have by faith longed after, and after whom my soul has panted.”

(Last Words of Saints and Sinners by Herbert Lockyer p. 124)

ZWINGLI, ULRICH (1484-1531, Swiss Reformer)

“They can kill the body, but not the soul.”

(Last Word of Saints and Sinners by Herbert Lockyer p. 74)

## *From The Readers . . .*

Just to let you know that you’re doing a great job with your paper. Keep up the good work.

– **IL**

We enjoy the Notebook – Philemon 4-7! – **MI**

[One dear brother called and said that his heart was touched and he was moved to tears as he read “The Basis of Fellowship.”] – **CA**

In times past we benefitted from your distinctive dispensational teachings. But now we find your holiness oriented mystical material to be redundant with numerous other Wesleyan publications. Perhaps in ages to come you will rediscover Ephesians 3:9, but until then we bid you a fond farewell. – **OH**

It was good to receive my issue of the BSN with words of instruction in righteousness. How very needful for us in this present evil world while we wait for that blessed shout. – **MO**

I have read the articles in the BSN twice. I was thrilled by them. – **VA**

I enjoy the challenging articles of the BSN. – **MO**

Thanks for the BSN. I look forward to receiving it and am always happy to see it in the mail. – **PA**

I thank God for you, your family, and ministry. – **FL**

Your Notebook is a great inspiration. “Be not weary in well doing!” – **AZ**