



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 70

## *We Are God's Workmanship*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"*  
(Ephesians 2:10).

Sometimes the Christian life is filled with frustration, discouragement, and guilt. These are all rooted in self-reliance. They are a failure of faith to lay hold on the reality of God's workmanship in our lives.

*"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that **worketh in us**"*  
(Ephesians 3:20).

*"For it is God which **worketh in you** both to will and to do of His good pleasure"*  
(Philippians 2:13).

*"From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the **effectual working in the measure of every part**, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Ephesians 4:16).

William R. Newell well articulated the basis of these distresses:

To "hope to be better" is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.

To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself.

To be discouraged is unbelief – as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you.

To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

As believers, we are to walk by faith in what God has said to us.

*"For we walk by faith, not by sight"* (II Corinthians 5:7).

The fact is simple – we are not self-made, "*we are His workmanship*" (Ephesians 2:10). The great God of the universe is steadily working in our lives. We are His handiwork. He began the work, and faith is confident He will finish it.

*"Being confident of this very thing, that **He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6).

And it is His faithfulness that carries out this work to its completion.

1. William R. Newell, Romans, Verse by Verse.

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# Letters to the Editor

"I wanted to thank you for your excellent article on the appearing of our Lord [BSN #65]. You always do a thorough and timely piece of work." – **VA**

"Just a line to tell you how much I enjoyed the last BSN. Please keep it coming!" – **WI**

I have been reading PAGAN CHRISTIANITY and what an eye-open[er] to the non-biblical practices that I subjected myself to. No more. Thank God. A very lonely walk, but I know I'm not alone. Having stepped out of the organized Christianity, others are questioning my true belief in JESUS CHRIST as my LORD AND SAVIOR. Gracefully, I walk this present evil world. – **FL**

"Just to let you know that your doing a great job with your paper. Keep up the good work." – **IL**

"Thanks for your faithful service! Your articles have been a great benefit to me!" – **IL**

"I have always appreciated your willingness to let the Bible be true, even if it meant giving up one's prior beliefs. Over the years, I have had a similar spiritual pilgrimage. After believing the gospel of the grace of God, I eventually found myself with a desire to preach the Word. Before I ever "pastored" an assembly, I was convinced of "mid-Acts" dispensationalism. Because of this, I was asked to leave the Baptist assembly I was a "member" of. Over the years, there have been other "troubling" doctrines as

I studied God's Word. One such was the final destiny of man. After I had been a "grace believer" for awhile, I became somewhat convinced of annihilationism, with the issue pretty much on the backburner for several years. About 10 years ago, I met a man by the name of H.G. Binney, who was in his 70s at the time. He held the "mid-Acts" view also, but upon talking with him, I found out that he believed a rather strange doctrine of the universal reconciliation of all. I looked into this doctrine briefly but swept it under the "rug". I began a study of it again over the past year and have now come to embrace it as the precious truth it is. What a wonderful Savior He is!!! – **TN**

"Thank you for your recent publications. It was so good to hear from you and hear what is going on in your lives. I am sure this was a massive move as well, but now that you are settling, I know that it will be a wonderful expansion of your ministry." – **FL**

"We appreciate your publications." – **FL**

"We appreciate the clarity of your understanding of the Scriptures and we go over your 'Notebook' in our studies." – **IL**

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

"Keep up the good work!" – **IL**

"How refreshing your editorial was about Bible studies!!! We are like minded there!" – **ME**

## **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 (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."

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

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(recompiled and edited)

***“Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it”*** (I Thessalonians 5:24).

Things are not as they appear. This divine work in our lives will culminate in “every man” having the praise of God.

***“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come ... and then shall every man have praise of God”*** (I Corinthians 4:5).

If it is true that He has made us, and not we ourselves; if it is true that He began the work and will complete it; then why do we fret so? Why are we anxious and troubled? Why are we full of care, frustration, and discouragement? After all, is He not God? Is He not in charge?

***“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 4:6-7).

Spiritual growth does not occur at the rate, or in the methods that are traditionally accepted. Instead God works steadily and effectually for His Own purpose. He is in no rush by human schedule. He works to bring us to a place of spiritual quietness, which along with assurance, is an effect of righteousness.

***“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever”*** (Isaiah 32:17).

His divine work may not be done in accordance with our time tables, or by our predetermined methods or standards, but nonetheless He is the Creator and we are His creatures. He is the Potter and we are the clay. He molds and fashions us according to His own will and design.

***“But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand”*** (Isaiah 64:8).

***“Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel”*** (Jeremiah 18:2-6).

Even Paul the Apostle echos these thoughts:

***“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”*** (Romans 9:21).

The Master Potter is faithfully, and steadily at work. And He works all things after His own will.

***“In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”*** (Ephesians 1:11).

His hand in our lives leaves no place untouched. Even that which seemingly is working against us, is used by our Father to fulfill His goal in our lives.

***“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”*** (Romans 8:28).

This truth can be seen in the life of our Apostle. Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. Many circumstances had the appearance of working negatively in his life. Yet, he wrote with such confidence that the opposite was true:

***“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel”*** (Philippians 1:12).

Another powerful example is demonstrated in the life of Joseph. The same was true with him. His brothers had sold him into slavery. This had been, upon the surface, a very sad and unfortunate turn of events. But Joseph saw a divine purpose:

*“But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good**”* (Genesis 50:20).

At times He leads us through “*the valley of the shadow of death,*” but as long as He is with us – even the darkest, lowest valley is HIGH GROUND!

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for **Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me**”* (Psalm 23:4).

We can trust God, He has a definite goal in sight! Our Father is taking each of us on a journey that has as it’s final goal conformity unto Christ.

*“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”* (Romans 8:29).

To be conformed to the image of His Son is our predestination. To take us on this journey will mean many years of wilderness and valleys. And His current goal is to bring us to a place where we find our completeness, satisfaction, contentment, glory, thanksgiving, and rejoicing in Him, and not in our circumstances. This is what a walk of faith is all about. Not saying, “Look, Look ...” while pointing to the circumstances all around us. But saying, “Look, Look ...” while pointing to our Lord and His cross. For Christ and His cross-work are the very object of the Father’s eye.

On this journey, each of us are at different places. And being at different places does not necessarily mean one is ahead or behind another spiritually. It just means the Lord needed to take each of us in such different (and yet at the same time so similar) paths due to the uniqueness of our personalities, upbringing and influences, as well as His unique

purpose in our lives – all as it pleases Him.

*“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, **as it hath pleased Him**”* (I Corinthians 12:18).

And in our diversities, He works *all in all*!

*“And there are **diversities** of operations, but it is the same God which **worketh all in all**”* (I Corinthians 12:6).

Miles Stanford aptly wrote about this process:

*“So many of us, after having entered into some of the deeper realities of our Lord, seek to immediately pull or push others into this wonderful advancement; and then we wonder why they are so slow to learn and seemingly apathetic in their understanding and concern. We so easily forget the many years it took, and by what wandering wilderness ways our Lord had to traverse with us in order to bring us over Jordan and into Canaan.”<sup>2</sup>*

God is active in our lives, and the lives of our brethren. We need not live lives filled with care, frustration, discouragement, and guilt. We can by faith lay hold of the reality of God’s own personal **workmanship** in our lives.

We are to rest in His great workmanship in our lives. Paul reminds us of what our walk with the Lord is all about:

*“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him”* (Colossians 2:6).

We are to continue walking in divine life the same way we received it! And how did we receive it?

*“For **by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves:** it is the gift of God: **Not of works,** lest any man should boast. **For we are His workmanship,** created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

2. Miles Stanford, The Principles of Spiritual Growth.

*“But to him that **worketh not, but believeth** on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5).*

We began divine life by grace through faith, without works. Paul says this is the way we continue to walk in it. *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.”*

The Galatian believers had fallen into the trap of believing they were their own workmanship – that their spiritual life was of their own making – that they were somehow in control of divine life.

*“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? **Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?**” (Galatians 3:1-3).*

Again, Paul brings us to this basic principle of divine life. *“As ye have therefore received Christ*

*Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.”*

We rest, look, and wait upon our Father. Our only expectation is from Him, and we will not be disappointed!

*“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for **my expectation is from Him**” (Psalm 62:5).*

*“But they that **wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength**; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).*

*“For the earnest **expectation of the creature waiteth** for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).*

*“**Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ**” (Philippians 1:6).*

Have complete confidence in God, our Father. He will do it! ■

## *What Are You Occupied With?*

by – E.W. Bullinger  
1837-1913

The full occupation with a heavenly object will alone make us heavenly without an effort. We have not to try to be this or that: We “beholding ... are changed” (II Corinthians 3:18). Nothing else will form our character.

## *Church History*

by – Marvin L. Fieldhouse

Church history is the account of big religious programs and movements, of masses of people rallying behind a particular emphasis; but it is also the sad tale of how very few (in comparison) ever became obsessed and possessed with one man, Jesus Christ.

*The Modern Menace of Protestantism*

Vantage Press, 1964

Page 27

# Closer than a Brother

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME

### PART XXX

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).*

**T**his is a passage of Scripture that is quite familiar to most Christians. Almost always this verse is used as a reference to Jesus Christ. And truly, to those of us who trust Him, He is closer than a brother. But the context of this proverb will reveal that the subject of this particular friendship is *not* the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a man’s WIFE!

Look just two verses before,

*“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22).*

Now, with this context in mind, let us consider a few things about our text.

### THE ULTIMATE FRIENDSHIP

*“**There is a friend** that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).*

*“There is a friend”* – Truly God has designed the wife to be her husband’s “best friend.” This is the ultimate friendship! Anything less than this level of friendship in marriage is to miss one of life’s greatest treasures from God. (Dogs are NOT intended to be man’s best friend!)

As a man and a woman enter into marriage it is important that they recognize that God fully intends they become friends of the highest level. Marriage is designed to give us our closest friend!

This ultimate level of friendship is demonstrated by the words ...

### CLOSER THAN A BROTHER

*“There is a friend that sticketh **closer than a brother**” (Proverbs 18:24).*

When we think of close early relationships, obviously family members come to mind. And often among family members, it is the sibling relationships that are the closest. *Brothers* – what a grand earthly relationship!

But God has designed a relationship closer than that of brothers! The fact is that a husband and his wife become relatives – a relationship that goes beyond that of *blood brothers*. One’s spouse is their very “*next of kin*.”

Little wonder that Solomon, the author of our text (Proverbs), in the Song of Solomon loved to affectionately call his queen,

*“my sister, my spouse” (4:9)*

*“my sister, my spouse” (4:10)*

*“my sister, my spouse” (4:12)*

*“my sister, my spouse” (5:1)*

In 5:2 he refers to her as, “*my sister, my love*”

Little wonder that her terms of endearment to him were,

*“my well beloved” (1:13)*

*“my beloved” (1:14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10; 6:2, 3; 7:9, 10, 11, 13; 8:14)*

In 5:16 she refers to him as:

*“my beloved, ... my friend”*

## STICKETH

*“There is a friend that **sticketh** closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).*

It is interesting that Solomon uses the word *sticketh* in relationship to this friendship. This is the only place this English word appears in Scripture. It is the Hebrew word *dabeg* and is defined by James Strong as “*adhearing*.”<sup>1</sup> It is also translated *cleave*. It is a variation of the Hebrew word *dabag*, which is translated as *cleave* in Genesis chapter 2:

*“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:23-25).*

The Hebrew word here is defined, “to stick, as things that are glued together.”<sup>2</sup> Our English word *cleave* is defined as:

“To stick; to adhere; to hold to ... with strong attachment” – Noah Webster (1828)

“To adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly” – Merriam-Webster

“To cling closely, steadfastly, or faithfully” – Encarta World English Dictionary

Likewise, our English word “stick” is defined as:

“To be united; to be inseparable; to cling fast to” – Noah Webster (1828)

The Scripture is presenting an intimate relationship, entered through a *single flesh* union. This is first seen in the marriage of Eden:

*“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall CLEAVE unto HIS WIFE: and THEY shall be ONE FLESH. And they were both naked, the man and*

*his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:24-25).*

Marriage is a husband and wife becoming *one flesh* (i.e., *united flesh*). And what unites the flesh of a husband and wife? It is the act of coitus – sexual intercourse, otherwise known as the “marriage act.”

Notice that this *single flesh* principle is repeated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by Paul, our apostle:

*“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall CLEAVE to HIS WIFE: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but ONE FLESH. What therefore God hath JOINED together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:5-6).*

*“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be JOINED unto HIS WIFE, and they two shall be ONE FLESH” (Ephesians 5:31).*

What a blessed *union* is created by divine design! What a *bond* to be valued, nurtured, cherished, protected, and enjoyed!

Nothing should be allowed to stand between a husband and his wife being “best friends.” Utmost care must be taken to guard against *any* relationship that would compete with, or compromise this special relationship ordained by God. NO ONE else, not even a parent or sibling, has the right to be closer than our spouse!

NO ONE should be allowed to know more about us, than our husband or wife! NO ONE should know more about our dreams, our desires, our hurts, our faults. NO ONE should know more about us! NO ONE should be allowed to be *closer* to us than our spouse! NO ONE! PERIOD!

Earth’s friendship of the loftiest measure is, by divine decree, to be that which is produced by marital bliss. Thank God,

*“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). ■*

1. Strong’s Concordance Lexicon, Hebrew #1695.

2. Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies.

# Reader's Question Box

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

## Question #1

*"What does Paul mean in II Timothy 3:6 'for this sort creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts?' What SINS is Paul writing about?" – G.R.*

Dear G.R.

Staying in line with the context of Paul's letter to Timothy, I would say that the sins (of II Timothy 3:6) have to do with apostasy, and are therefore religious sins. Many women are often especially vulnerable to being taken out from under the scriptural and spiritual authority of the home, and being led into the "divers lusts" of the religious system. The religious system is a testimony to this fact.

"Silly women" is Strong's Greek #1133 [gunaikarion] from #1135, meaning "foolish" women. They are foolish by leaving their God-given cover of the home for the man-made "cover" of the religious system.

"Lust" is Strong's Greek #1939 [epithumia] from #1937, meaning "a longing," "a desire."

Genesis 3:6 tells us, "When the woman saw that

the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit." Note particularly the phrase "desired to make one wise." That desire is lust! In this case the lust lead her scripturally and spiritually away from her husband and into the religion of the Serpent. Then her husband soon followed her! (As is the case with many husbands and wives!)

Just as Eve submitted to the religion of the Serpent in the garden of Eden, so in Paul's day, and in our day, the Satanic method is the same: "Lead captive silly women." Paul is warning Timothy of this standard of Satanic operation.

Now, women are not alone in succumbing to these religious lusts. Paul had already firmly warned Timothy himself of this danger – "Flee also youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22a.) For a look at this "youthful lust" see the added notes in BSN #56, page 605, under the heading "RELIGIOUS LUSTS." In the same issue, on page 608, under the heading "LEAD AWAY FROM THE HOME," you can also see more information on this overall theme.

This is my current understanding of the passage.

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