



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume IV
Issue 81

Busy Doing the Lord's Work

by – Andre Sneidar

We've heard the typical statement from believers that they want to be "busy doing the Lord's work." Many struggle with trying to find out just what that work is, so they "busy" themselves with their involvement in many activities revolving around their participation in their "church's" calendar of "events."

However, in considering just what "the Lord's work" is, Paul told the Philippians that "... *it is God which worketh in you ...*" (2:13). What this implies is that if there is any work to be done, then it is not the believer who should be doing it – God is *already* doing the work! So what is "the Lord's work?" The Lord's work is Him working in the believer!

We have a tendency to over-analyze and try to come up with the details, *i.e.*, the why, how and wherefore of whatever it is about God that we want to understand; but that is a lot of "work." What we should be "doing" is just believing – believing what God said, and trusting that He is doing whatever He is doing in us.

When we "busy" ourselves in the struggle to know/try/do the Lord's will, we insert ourselves into the vicious cycle of feelings of frustration and failure that are the inevitable result of self-effort, which only gets in the way of the true work of the Lord.

Yet God has really made it quite easy to know just what it is He is doing, just what His work is. The rest of the verse tells us that God is working in us "*to will and to do of His good pleasure.*" Wow! That is easy. It doesn't say that He is working in the believer to go on Tuesday night visitation, or attend Wednesday night prayer vigils, or

participate in Thursday night choir practice, or even, dare we say, go to "church."

So if we have a desire (will) to accomplish something (do) in our lives, and it is done in faith and love ensuring that it doesn't hurt anyone (Romans 13:10), then it is God who has given that to us, and then what we do will please God. This is Christ living out His life in the believer. Isn't that a wonderful thing, to know that we are pleasing God in this manner, that God takes delight, pleasure and satisfaction in us when we believe, trust and rest in *His* work?

It really is o.k. to do things, when we acknowledge that God is God, and that He is the one directing our lives (*c.f.* Proverbs 3:6). Let's get out of God's way so that *His* work can finally be accomplished in our lives.

It's so much easier to leave the details to God, and let Him "worry" about being busy doing His own work. That way we can rest, and enjoy our lives. If we need to know something, let's allow God to reveal it to us in His own time and manner.

As it has been said, quit trying, and start trusting. Let God work out the details, and begin enjoying your life in Him. ■

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Dear Readers:

Greetings in the glorious grace of our wonderful Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

BSN Milestone

With our last issue of the **BSN** we reached our 80th issue. We count it a great joy to be able to serve you through these printed pages. It is our prayer that these small efforts will be used of God to strengthen His dear saints, and bring glory to Him.

New **BSN** Masthead

Also in our last issue we made a change to our masthead. This is the fifth such change in our 80 issues. These changes actually tell a story. Issues 1-16 had a hand-design by Mickie Williams. It had an open Bible with note paper on it, accompanied by a lamp and feather pen in an inkwell. These issues marked our publishing under the auspices of *Grace Bible Church*. Issues 17-38 marked a change, publishing under the support of *Grace Edification Ministries*. This masthead had an open Bible with a gemstone, along with the words *Grace Edification Ministries*. In issues 39-65 we replaced *Grace Edification Ministries* with a simple *B. S. N.* Issues 66-79 carried the *Pilkington* family coat of arms, making note that this was now a family ministry. It has been brought to our attention that the coat of arms might remind some of the inquisition mentality of the dark ages. Therefore, we have decided to simply go with the "reaper" from the top of our family coat of arms. We think the "reaper" is appropriate, for we do indeed seek to reap glorious truths from the Word of God, as well as a harvest of hearts who seek the truth in love.

Our love to each of you!

Your fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr

Reader's Response

"I received your latest issue of the BSN (#80) today. How sad and disappointed I was to read what you, as editor, chose to put forth to those of us who sincerely desire to study the Word, rightly divided. I think Satan has won a great victory with this particular issue. Since when did Universal Reconciliation become a Pauline truth? Since when did you cease to be a Berean? ...Please cancel my remaining issues..." – **FL**

"I have enjoyed the articles you have been doing on hell. Your always in my thoughts and prayers" – **NY**

"To be on the receiving end of God's Love is a humbling experience....a love that has no cause, a love that acts in the giving of self for your enemies, a love that will die for those who hate you, a love that would take me from the dunghill and place me at the right hand of the Father in Christ! Dear Brother, the Lord has brought you into my life for a purpose and a reason. To love here in this world is just a taste of the love we all will have in His Presence... the Presence of LOVE! There are no words that can possibly describe what I am now learning and seeing... only those who truly know the truth will understand! I used to know the verses, the doctrines, etc, but only by the letter... I could quote the verses and all the while I was boasting in what I THOUGHT I knew... I was blind but the Lord has opened my eyes... instead of seeing my knowledge, my works, my achievements, I saw a person... my eyes beheld my Savior, who loved me and GAVE HIMSELF for me when I was yet dead in my sins! For the first time I saw LOVE. I am sure you know what I am feebly trying to express... God is the Author and the Finisher of my faith... Clyde, Heaven is going to be wonderful when we all will come together in that LOVE and see in each other, that we all are His Creation... created for Him! What JOY that will be! Your brother in Christ Jesus who thanks God for you being in my life!" – **MA**

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This weekly publication (52 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 "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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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)

Wife Cherishing

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME PART XXXV

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:29).

Husbands, allow me to speak freely to you about one of the most wonderful responsibilities that God has given to us – that of wife cherishing. Contained in our Scripture text is what I believe to be one of the most powerful of all the Pauline verses dealing with marriage.

Paul gives husbands the highest example for marriage – that of Christ *cherishing* His church. To be *cherished* is one of the greatest needs that a woman has! It is to be the very object of husbands to learn how to divinely cherish their wives. Learning this privilege will take a lifetime of endeavor and passion. Indeed, this is the godly pursuit that will enable husbands to live in, and enjoy close marital bliss with their wives.

CHERISH DEFINED

Noah Webster defines our English word “*cherish*” as:

“To treat with tenderness and affection; to give warmth, ease or comfort to. To hold as dear; to embrace with affection; to foster, and encourage.”

A HIGHER PLANE

When speaking of cherishing we do not mean the mere peaceful coexistence with the wives. Having a peaceful marriage, with rarely a clash does not necessarily mean that husbands are *cherishing* their wives. Cherishing is moving up to a far higher plane.

Neither is cherishing a mere feeling. It is important to realize that we can’t always follow our emotions, as they are not consistently reliable. It is a very normal thing for there to be highs and lows in husbands’ feelings toward their wives. During periods of *lower*

emotional feelings for our spouses we need to consciously focus our attention on our wives and take positive, strong initiative that will adequately express our undying devotion and love toward them. Our feelings will catch up and follow our lead.

WHAT WIVES NEED

Now, what our wives need is tremendous love and reassurance from us – of who they are to us, and what they mean to us.

We should pursue our wives – touch them, hold them, kiss them, talk to them! We need to communicate with them, thinking of anything and everything that we can honestly say to them. They need to hear from us. We need to think of *hundreds* of different ways that we can verbalize our need of them. Think of *hundreds* of ways that we can clearly demonstrate to them this need as well.

They desire to know us, and we need to know them. We need to open up and tell them things that are deep within our own hearts. Encourage them to reveal their hidden selves to us. We should be as tender and gentle with them as we possibly can be. It is this cherishing of our wives that can lead to a richer and more meaningful bond.

We need to talk with them about their wants, and likes, and needs. We need to make them the joy, pleasure, passion, and goal of *our* lives. Live for them! Cherish them!

If we accomplish nothing else in our lives – let it be loving and cherishing our wives! Let that be the passionate beat of our hearts, and whatever else has to fall by the wayside to reach this godly goal will not be too high a price to pay. Our wives are worth it! Nothing is more important than they are! ►

OUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

Day by day we are getting older. Time is slipping through our hands, like a fist full of sand. We are running out of minutes. Wrap up those minutes in our wives. Make it our steadfast determination to do so!

We need to reach out to them. Keep reaching and keep trying. Never be satisfied with the level of our bond. Keep going deeper!

WE ARE THE KEY

Our wives should feel special. They should feel that there is no one or anything that is more important to us than they are. They desperately need our reassurance and the tender expressions of our love to them, and of their place in our lives – *over and over, and over again*, and then *some more!* We have the power! We are the men! We can make them blossom! Or, we can make them dry up!

In other words, we love and cherish our wives, partly because we have decided and determined to do so!

TAKE HIS LEAD

Sometimes it may be difficult for us, and easy to withdraw and allowed our relationship with our wives to deteriorate and become cold. We may feel and think more than once, “I am tired, I think I will just give up!” Yet the Lord would never say that to us. It is *He* Who is our Life and Pattern, so take *His* lead. After all, He loves and cherishes us, and we love and cherish our wives! So if we have hurt and pain, choose to switch them for love and tenderness. Remember why we married our wives in the first place – is not time to stop cherishing them just because our emotions and feelings are confused and standing in our way.

We demonstrate that we cherish our wives by giving to them our time. We need to spend all the time that we can with them, making them – as best we can – the very object of our days. We can demonstrate our cherishing of them by trying to tell them as often and in as many ways as we can how special they are, what we like about them, how much they mean to us, etc. We need to tell them often that we love them. They need to hear it many times a day; and it all pays off, for the more we do and say, the more

we will want to do and say, and then the feelings will follow course.

MARITAL BLISS

Now, the reason that I write these words is that I might remind us that our bonds with our wives are not just based upon “natural” causes. Let’s be motivated by our desire to have our marriages be *all* the bliss that God intended, and to cherish our wives with everything that we have.

Make our days *their* days. Make our evenings *their* evenings. Make our nights *their* nights. Make *them* the center of our attention. Focus on *them*!

Let’s not forget to follow His lead. Give up our lives for them.

*“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and **gave Himself for it**” (Ephesians 5:25).*

In every area of our lives make it about their joy, their happiness, their contentment, their pleasure.

*“He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how **he may please his wife**” (I Corinthians 7:33).*

You want to live like a king? Treat her like your queen. All else will come in time.

Our wives are the most valuable, precious and important things in our lives! Be sure they know it, *everyday*.

*Cherish is the word I use to describe
All the feeling that I have hiding here for you inside
You don’t know how many times I’ve wished
that I had told you
You don’t know how many times I’ve wished
that I could hold you
You don’t know how many times I’ve wished
that I could mold you into someone who
could
Cherish me as much as I cherish you,
and I do, cherish you.*

(Terry Kirkman)

The Powers that Be

by – Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers” (Romans 13:1).

This is Paul’s positive declaration recorded in Romans 13:1, and there is no verse in Scripture that has been misapplied more than this one. In all church theology “the higher powers” are made to be the civil authorities, whoever they may be in any country and at any time. [I]t needs to be said that of all the absurd interpretations ever made by theologians, this one takes first prize. It is unworkable and unbelievable, and it cannot be followed out through the additional statements that follow this declaration.

The initial declaration of Paul seems to present no great difficulty, since most law-abiding men are quite willing to be subject to those who rule over them, so far as the submission required does not conflict with duties toward God. However, the next statement, which is actually a part of the sentence, creates impossible difficulties. If “the higher powers” means the civil authorities, I cannot believe this statement; and I doubt if any of my readers can believe it unless they are given to simple-minded credulity.

Paul enforces his first statement by declaring that “there is no power [authority] but of God” (Romans 13:1). If this is applied to civil authorities, then we must believe that their authority comes from God; but the idea that those who govern derive their just powers from the consent of those governed, as our *Declaration of Independence* so majestically declares, must be rejected. That their authority comes from God, I do not believe and this I reject.

It would be interesting to know who first applied these words to civil authorities. One is suspicious that this happened in the days when men believed in the divine right of kings, when the civil powers and organized religion worked hand-in-glove to maintain absolute domination of the lives and thoughts of the people.

Whoever it was began a chain of errors that have been millstones upon the necks of many whose sole desire is to believe and practice whatever is written in the Word of God. This passage they cannot believe unless they close their eyes to the most obvious facts and divorce it from all that follows. The assiduous Bible student knows that Paul did not intend to convey any such ideas since he had already told the Corinthians to ignore the civil authorities when one believer had a matter against another (I Corinthians 6:1-3).

After his initial declaration in Romans 13:1, Paul goes on to say that “the powers that be are ordained of God.” The phrase “the powers that be” has become by popular usage a familiar synonym for the civil authorities, but this cannot be what Paul meant when he first wrote these words. If this is what it means, then we must believe that all civil authorities are God ordained men, that anyone who resists them is resisting the ordinance of God, and that all who do resist shall receive to themselves condemnation. This I do not believe, and this I cannot believe.

If I believed this, I would have to believe in the divine right of all who govern; and if these words speak of civil authorities, then we must admit that some of the heroes of the faith, whom we now honor, are honored because they did the very thing condemned here. History is filled with the deeds of faithful and heroic men who defied the civil powers in order to worship and serve God according to the light they had received. With them it was even as Peter said to those who ruled in Jerusalem, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

It would seem that the first two verses of Romans 13 present enough problems for those who insist that this passage sets forth the Christian’s duty toward civil authorities, but every declaration ►

that follows creates another major problem. “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil,” Paul continues. These words, if applied to civil authorities, are in direct contradiction to those spoken by Christ when He warned the apostles to,

“Beware of men: for they shall deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake” (Matthew 10:17-18).

These words applied to civil authorities would make perfect saints out of all who govern, but we know from experience that this is not the case. Too numerous to mention are the rulers who have persecuted those who have done good and have favored those who have done evil. God’s Word does not teach ridiculous things; therefore, it cannot be that the “higher powers” or “the powers that be” in Romans 13 has any reference to civil authorities.

This becomes still more evident when the balance of Paul’s words are considered.

“Nationalism is the strange belief that one country is better than another by virtue of the fact that you happen to be born there.”

– George Bernard Shaw

empowered, and God-authorized men called Apostles. We first read of this great authority in Matthew 10:1

“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same ... For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing” (Romans 13:3, 6).

After reading these words, the reader should ask himself if he believes that tax collectors are God’s servants who are doing His work in imposing and collecting the taxes laid upon us.

Through the years I have consulted many commentaries on this passage, commentaries from my own library, in other libraries, and from the shelves of bookstores. All of these have agreed that Paul speaks here of civil authorities, but all problems are ignored and all difficulties are glossed over. One expositor sums up his comments

by saying: “Since there are no spiritual authorities among men today to whom these words refer, then, in spite of the great difficulties created, we must apply them to civil authorities.”

This commentator stumbled upon the solution when he said, “no spiritual authorities today.” This is the key to the whole matter; but what about the day when these words were written, the time period to which they should be applied? Will anyone dare to say that there were no such authorities in the thirty-three years of which the book of Acts is the history? There were men of God on earth then of whom every word spoken here was true, and to whom every statement could be applied without modification or alteration. These words belong to that New Testament time period, “The Acts Period.”

The chief characteristic of this time was the presence upon earth of God-commissioned, God-

where we are told that Jesus Christ gave them power (*exousia*, authority) over unclean spirits and over all manner of sickness and disease. This authority was in no way based upon their faith, devotion, or holiness. It was given even to Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:4). This authority was renewed and extended in Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23; and Luke 24:49. These words made these men the “higher powers” (Gk., superior authorities) of the Acts period.

We see this authority exercised in Acts 3:6 when Peter used it to bring complete healing to a man over forty years of age who had never walked. We see it from another standpoint in Acts 5 when he pronounced a sentence of death upon Ananias and Sapphira. He spoke and their death followed. He did not wear the sword as an empty symbol. We see it in the life of Paul in Acts 13 when he spoke the words that brought total blindness on Elymas the sorcerer. We see it again in Acts 14 when Paul commanded

the impotent cripple to “*Stand upright on thy feet.*”

The superior authority that was given to men in the Acts period was not limited to the twelve apostles. In Romans 12:8 Paul exhorts those who rule to do it with diligence. He instructed the Thessalonians to recognize those who “*are over you in the Lord*” (I Thessalonians 5:12). There were gifts of government (I Corinthians 12:28), and some were set among the out-called ones for this specific purpose. All who possessed this gift qualified as “*higher powers,*” or superior authorities to whom all believers were to be subject.

When we read Romans 13:1-7 in the light of these positive truths, all questions are answered and all difficulties disappear. The apostles and other divinely appointed rulers of the Acts period were the “*higher powers*” to whom every soul was to be subject. They had their authority from God and they were ordained of God. If anyone resisted their

authority, he resisted God’s arrangement; and such actions were sure to result in divine punishment. These authorities were never a terror to good works, only to the evil.

If any complained of the power of these men (the words of Romans 13:3 would indicate that some did), they were told to do good and they would have no cause for fear, and would be sure to receive praise; but if they did evil, they would have every cause to fear; for these men did not bear in vain the power to exact the most severe penalties. They were God’s servants, His avengers to execute wrath upon those who did evil.

Thus, we find in Romans 13:1-7 a most powerful argument for rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Tim. 2:15), and the necessity for recognizing to the fullest extent the unique position of some men in the Acts period and the unique character of God’s dealings with men at that time. ■

Workers and Covers

by – David M. Carr

Indeed, the first thing the creator God does with the man is not put him in relationship, but places him in the garden to “*dress it and to keep it*” (Genesis 2:15). God creates the woman not only as an answer to loneliness, but as a helper in this garden work (Genesis 2:18). Thus, the first humans in the garden are two things intertwined, workers and lovers ...

This part of the story can prompt us to consider how erotic love and work might be deeply interconnected. For although many find themselves lost in the grind of meaningless jobs, there can be a deep erotic dimension to work that coincides with what is deepest in ourselves ...

Genesis 2 preserves the vision that work *can* come from our core. Many of us find ourselves caught at least sometimes in oppressive or addictive work ...

Indeed, the garden of Eden story sets the first human erotic relationship in the context of just such work. God begins the process of creating the woman by saying, “*It is not good that the man should be*

alone; I will make an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18) ... First and foremost, the man and woman in Eden garden share in working the ground from which they were made ... It is in the context of such sharing of our deepest vocations that our relationships can become sacred and joyful ...

For Genesis 2 does not envision humans just in joyful embrace of one another, but also as joined in common work; and society does not just shut down humans sexually, but it also forces people to engage in crushing work that alienates rather than enlivens them ... This is the way that we are alienated, day by day and hour by hour, from our core passions and dreams. We may be tempted to assume that this is just the way things are, that we just need to grin and bear it. Yet this ancient text at the outset of the Biblical tradition suggests otherwise; it suggests that the God of the cosmos originally formed us for another destiny – for shared work and love.

The Erotic Word (2003)
Pages 34-38 ■

Where Do Babies Go When They Die?

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Here is the age-old question: “Where do babies go when they die?” Even though the topic is sometimes hotly debated, the answer is really quite simple.

They go where everyone goes when they die – to the grave.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20).

David had an infant son who died, to which he responded:

*“But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? **I shall go to him**, but he shall not return to me” (II Samuel 12:23).*

David fully expected to join his son one day.

So, the issue is simple – if we know where David went when he died, we would know where his son went. Just where did David go when he died? What does the Bible actually tell us?

David went where everyone goes when they die:

*“So David **slept with his fathers, and was buried** ...” (I Kings 2:10).*

David is not in heaven, or in a fiery hell, or

in paradise. David is buried and in the grave. Peter attested to this clear truth:

*“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that **he is both dead and buried**, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).*

*“**For David is not ascended into the heavens** ...” (Acts 2:34).*

Paul also confirmed the truth of David’s whereabouts:

*“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, **fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption**” (Acts 13:36).*

David and his son, along with all the dead are in the grave awaiting resurrection:

“... All who are in their graves shall hear His voice” (John 5:28).

“... Them that sleep in the dust shall awake ...” (Daniel 12:2).

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death ...” (Hosea 13:14).

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Corinthians 15:17-19).

