



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume IV
Issue 92

I Choose! Living Life to Its Fullest Part VIII

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

I CHOOSE ... LIVELIHOOD

I have my work laid before me today, but my work is so much more than a way of making money. It is the opportunity for God to live out His life in me.

Work is His plan for me. Ultimately God is my employer. I really work for Him.

I Choose to Do My Work unto the Lord

*“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, **as unto Christ**; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but **as the servants of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, **as to the Lord, and not to men**: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free”* (Ephesians 6:5-8).

In this passage Paul speaks to those who have the greatest disadvantage in the work place – slaves. He covered the most extreme working conditions so I would know all work, no matter how difficult, no matter how taxing, can be done “as to the Lord, and not to men” – “whether he

be bond or free.”

In fact, all I do is to be done unto the Lord.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ...” (Colossians 3:17, 23).

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Corinthians 10:31).

I will work consciously for my Father. My labors today will ultimately be for Him.

I Choose to Follow Paul’s Commandment

“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (I Thessalonians 4:11).

Work is honorable. I will study to be quiet. I will do my own business. I will work with my own hands.

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Readers' Responses to BSN #84

We appreciate the response we have received from BSN #84. The entire issue was devoted to Denis Durham's *An Open Letter to Grace Believers*.

Our hearts have been especially touched by letters from two of our readers. With both of them our hearts were so touched we were moved to tears. We have decided to take space in the BSN to run these letters.

I trust that they will touch your hearts as well.

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Issue 84 was the best issue yet. Denis Durham took the words straight out of my mouth. Although I'd read I Corinthians many times, I was in my early twenties before I understood that love was more excellent than knowledge, or what that would look like in real life. I had been steadily trained to replace the ranks of grace pushing Christians, but as I started reading the Bible (yes, even the non-Pauline epistles!) I began to realize that a message of grace, love and freedom was inconsistent with some of the coercive, argumentative, condemning, pride-filled methods I'd seen employed in its service.

It dawned on me that I didn't want to become like some "grace" believers who criticize other Christians for their ignorance (implying pride in our own knowledge), use every opportunity to pound the Pauline grace message into others (implying they are not acceptable as is),
(See **LETTERS**, page 948)

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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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.

Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studyshelf.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

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(recompiled and edited)

I Choose to Follow Paul's Example

Paul, my apostle (Romans 11:13) made his living making tents (Acts 18:3). He thereby taught me the divine value and purpose of work.

I too will be a “tentmaker” of sorts. That is, I will work with my own hands making a living. “Tentmaking” finds its own unique form in me. It matters little in the eternal perspective of things what the particular details of my own “tentmaking” involves. The important thing is that I am “tentmaking.”

One occupation is no higher or more pleasing to God than another. All work has meaning when it is done for the Lord. The life of God in me makes all things sacred.

I Choose My Divine Vocation

*“Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of **the vocation wherewith ye are called**”* (Ephesians 4:1).

Although Paul made his living making tents that is not what defined his life. He was not “Paul, the tentmaker.” No, he was defined by heaven in light of his divine calling and vocation: “Paul, the apostle.”

Paul reminds me that I too have a heavenly vocation. He implores me to “walk worthy of **the vocation**” wherewith I have been called. I must not confuse what I do to make a living with the purpose of my life. My occupation is just the context in which I carry out my divine calling. The circumstances of my earthly labors are but the backdrop of God’s working in my life. They are the stage of the Master Performer.

As with every believer, I have been called into “full time” ministry in the context of my personal daily life.

Every area and every aspect of my life belongs to

Him. No matter what the circumstances of life are around me, regardless of what earthly occupation I may use to supply my needs and those of others, I have a divine vocation to which I have been called.

I will live my life for the Lord, serving Him, and will do so in the context of “tentmaking.” More often than not, this context can have the appearance of a monotonous, daily routine. Yet the very life of God running its full course in my day-by-day circumstances will make my life anything but monotonous and routine.

I Choose to Live in the Hope of Reward for My Labors

In the context of daily work Paul writes,

“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (Ephesians 6:8).

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

If my work is done unto the Lord, He shall reward my earthly labors. How can this not be, for with Him living and working through me, all my labors are “*the work of the Lord*.”

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

In all my endeavors I will do the work of the Lord. My labors will be alive with the life of God – they will be His livelihood in me.

Today I choose livelihood.

I CHOOSE ... DIVINE-LIFE

I have great expectancy this morning. I awaken to the anticipation of life. I am alive: not just with any life, but I am alive with Divine-life. That is the life I choose. I choose His life. I choose His life living in me.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

I Choose Divine-Life Above Human-Life

There is a difference between human-life and divine-life. It is as different as the heaven and the earth. I choose His life above my former life in Adam.

Human-life is earthly and vain. It never reaches its goal; it is never satisfied, but the life of God is heavenly – always full and complete. It is rich and meaningful.

My former life – the old “I” – is contrasted with my new life – the new “I.” My new life is none other than the very life of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

My life is now His life.

“... Christ, Who is our life ...” (Colossians 3:4).

I Choose Divine-Life Above the Circumstances of Life

The life of God is full regardless of the circumstances in which I find myself. I have learned not to focus on the “bad circumstances.” I am also learning not to place my focus upon any circumstance, “good” or “bad,” for ultimately all of my circumstances, “good” or “bad,” are just that – circumstances. They are simply the things that stand around me as

God lives out His very life in me. (Circumstances; circum = around; stances = standing.)

The stability of my life as a son of God is not based upon the ups and downs of my circumstances. These are only the scenery of my journey here below. If I follow the situations and conditions of my surroundings I will miss God’s life living in me.

If I live my life based upon my surroundings, it will always bring about the unstable swings of “up” and “down.” Stability is not to be found in my circumstances, not even the “good” ones. Stability is only to be found in the Person and Life of my Father.

I, like Paul, will learn contentment in both being abased and in abounding.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

I Choose the God-Life Above the Good-Life

Many talk about living “the good life.” Many seek their identity and fulfillment in “good” circumstances. Yet today I choose that which is far greater than “the good life” – I choose to live “the God-life.” There is a vast difference between “the good-life” and “the God-life.”

The “good life” is just an interpretation and perception of the circumstances by humanity; humanity that is under the heavy-handed influence of culture, society and Adamic senses. All of this for me is the “old” humanity. I am now a part of the new humanity – the new creature in Jesus Christ.

My new perception of value is found in God alone. Thus “the God-life” is far superior to “the good-life,” for His life in me is something that is always steadfast and the same – always stable.

As a son of God I am now free to dwell in the fullness and vibrancy of His dynamic, unchanging life, living in and through me.

I Choose Divine-Life Manifest in Me

“*... That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body ... That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh*” (II Corinthians 4:10-11).

As my day unfolds I will live in the full and confident expectation of the manifestation of Divine-life living in me.

Today I choose Divine-life.

I Choose ... Reigning

Adam’s posterity live under the *reign of death*. Death rules their daily lives. It is not just that they will die one day; it is that death has dominion over their daily existence.

“*... death reigned by one ...*” (Romans 5:17).

“*... sin hath reigned unto death ...*” (Romans 5:21).

“*... who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15).

I Choose Reigning

I no longer live under the *reign of death*. God has freed me from the *reign of death* and has brought me unto the *reign of life*.

“*For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **shall reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17).

I Choose to Reign in Life

That I shall “*reign in life*” – this is the daily, moment-by-moment out-working of God in me. I need not live under the dominion of death in my daily existence. I have been given the *reign of life* – His life living out victoriously in my daily being.

I Choose the Reigning of Jesus Christ

This life, this *reigning in life* in me, is none other than the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“*For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life **by one, Jesus Christ***” (Romans 5:17).

I Choose the Reigning of Grace

By sharp contrast from those who are still identified in Adam, I have now *received* God’s grace, and *already possess* His *reign of grace* in my life.

“*That as sin hath reigned unto death, **even so might grace reign** through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 5:21).

I am not bound under the law: I live free under God’s glorious grace, it having broken sin’s power over me.

“*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*” (Romans 6:14).

I Choose Reigning's Effect

The present effect of God's grace upon me is clear. I have received the "abundance of grace" and shall "reign in life." I have *divine life* now! I do not have to wait for the resurrection to enjoy the victory of God's life living and reigning in me. I can presently live under the reign of divine purpose. The reason? Again, it is because this life in which I reign is the very life of my dear Saviour.

"... Christ, Who is our life" (Colossians 3:4).

Currently having *His* life, I can now *really* live. I am alive in abundant fullness. Is it any wonder that my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ said:

"... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

To which Paul would add the voice of praise:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ... To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

I will not allow Adamic bondage to reign over my life. It is but the shadow of my former self.

I will be who God has made me to be! I will live in the divine fullness of freedom in grace's reign – the *reign of life* in Christ Jesus!

Today I choose reigning.

I Choose ... Abundance

Regardless of what earthly abundance I may

or may not have, my Father has given me His abundance.

My *reigning in life* is unto Divine abundance. He has made my life abundantly full. I choose to live in that lavish abundance today.

I Choose Abundance over Human Vanity

Solomon described the state of daily Adamic-life "under the sun" (a phrase found 29 times in Ecclesiastes).

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; **all is vanity**. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3).

Simply put, Adamic-life is vain. It is futile, dry, barren, and unsatisfying. It is a life of utter emptiness and waste.

It is seemingly an endless cycle of human existence. It reminds me of a mouse running on the wheel in his cage:

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:4-8).

Solomon sums up mere human life and labor, saying that "*all is vanity*;" but consulting Paul, my apostle, will get another wider view of life:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

The contrasting of the “*all is vanity*” from Solomon, and the “*is not in vain*” from Paul, represent the difference between *Adamic-life* and *Christ-life*. Paul says, “*your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” Now that I have received the “**abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness” I “**shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.**” I presently possess the *life of Christ* – a vibrant, divine reality that removes human vanity.

That I “**shall reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ” is the divine answer to a life of vanity.

I Choose the Abundant Flow Coming Forth from God’s Grace

This “*abundance of grace*” literally opens up to me the floodgate of exceeding abundance from God.

“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).

I Choose the Abundance of Hope

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may **abound in hope**, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13).

I Choose the Abundance in Glory

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more **exceeding and eternal weight of glory**” (II Corinthians 4:17).

I Choose the Abundance in Wisdom and Prudence

“Wherein He hath **abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**” (Ephesians 1:8).

I Choose the Abundance of Power

“And what is the **exceeding greatness of His power** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Ephesians 1:19).

I Choose the Abundance of Love

“And this I pray, that your **love may abound** yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Philippians 1:9).

I Choose the Abundance of Mercy

“... According to His mercy ... which He **shed on us abundantly** through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:5-6).

I Choose Abundance with Thanksgiving

“Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, **abounding therein with thanksgiving**” (Colossians 2:7).

I Choose the Abundance in God’s Work in Me

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always **abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Today I choose abundance.

(to be continued)

LETTERS (continued from page 942)

and maintain an aura of superiority that they were humble enough to admit the error of their previous ways (implying that others aren't). The grace message was being clouded with the same disease of the Pharisees: pride, pride and pride.

After much contemplation of these inconsistencies and some very helpful articles in the BSN, I have come to the following understanding. Grace, by definition, accepts and loves people as they are, especially when they don't measure up (to God's standards, or our own). Trying to change others nullifies grace, and places ourselves in the judgment seat of God. This is distasteful to everyone.

I am also beginning to suspect that the ungraceful methods of pushing the grace message may stem from some distorted beliefs about God and his relation to men. If one believes that God will "hold you accountable" (i.e., reward or punish) for your faithfulness based on your pushing of the grace message, and "hold others accountable" for their acceptance or rejection of it, then it is of utmost importance that you push it regardless of the benefit, or lack of benefit, to others. The fault of rejection is then at the other's door, and not at yours. This approach is based on a fear of punishment, and is inconsistent with grace. It is a law-based approach. If someone believes that we are the force that will convince others to believe, we will argue ourselves blue in the face, doing our utmost to set everyone free from the constraints of religion. The Bible teaches that God convicts and convinces men through the Holy Spirit, not we. God is able; we aren't. The constant arguing about grace with fellow believers demonstrates a distrust in the ability of God to make His own message known, and is contrary to grace. If someone believes that he came to understand anything through his own study and humility, he mistakes the meaning of grace. Just as God forms man and keeps him alive every day, God grants understanding to men. Do not mistake God's gift of understanding for your own mental acuity. Such belief is contrary to grace.

The thing that has become crystal clear to me in

these musings is the insidious nature of men's pride. Pride manages to creep in everywhere, so much a part of ourselves we are not even conscious of it. Understanding grace has become an excuse for pride. Is this not an irony? We talk about grace, and live as though we are better than others.

We disdain other meetings, criticize other believers' ignorance, and use their company to push our understanding.

Is this not contradictory? As I Corinthians 8:1 so succinctly declares, "*Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*" Let us ask ourselves whom our conversation edifieth: ourselves, or our fellow man? – **CA**

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Amen, Brother Denis! Word for word, you spoke my husband's and my hearts. What a confirmation and blessing to us.

It seems we've traveled similar paths. We were saved in 1981, grounded in the KJV, taught to study the Scriptures, moved on to grace, learned how to rightly divide, ended up "without the camp" ... all that in 25 years. We so identified with all you wrote and all the Lord is showing you.

When I first got saved, I tried so hard to win my family to the Lord. And then as we grew, I, like you, tried to also bring believers along to see the same things I was seeing in Scripture. In those first years, the Lord gave me:

*"And the servant of the Lord **must not strive**; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in **meekness** instructing those that oppose themselves; **if God peradventure** will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Timothy 2:24-26).*

He showed me that I was just like a Jehovah's Witness or Amway rep. I was trying to "sell" God

and my beliefs to people. And what was my reaction to Jehovah's witnesses or Amway sales people ... I wanted to run the other way ... I was not drawn to them. And I was doing the same thing to my family. God showed me He was a big God and didn't need me to "sell" Him to other people. He requested only that I love Him and love them. And as HE was lifted up in my life, others would be drawn to HIM not to me or be impressed with my knowledge in the scriptures.

But then, I had to learn this *same lesson* as I grew because I wanted my fellow believers to know the freedom from legalism, to love the KJV, to rightly divide, to home church, etc. etc. etc. And every new truth I learned, I wanted everyone to come with me. Again, the Lord impressed upon my heart the very words you wrote ...

*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for **God is able** to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind***

(Romans 14:4-5).

And now, Brother Clyde is sharing some insight that may be leading us into a further understanding of our God. So we're constantly being enlightened in truth. As it's ongoing for us, *it is also ongoing for other believers*. We must allow God to work this all out in our individual lives ... long and short of it is ... *we must let God be God!*

To illustrate grace and love in our lives, I share the following:

My husband is 58, I am 55 and our only son is 34. He and his wife lead a Bible study and attend Calvary Chapel. Our grandchildren attend a Christian school. At times, I have been grieved that I could not fellowship completely with our son in the truths that God has led us. I know our son loves us and totally comes to us with big, spiritual things in his life; but he has shared with us that he believes that the body is missing out by us not

being a part of it in a local church. There's just no way we can explain where we're at. We have explained that we do not want him to stop being where he is at unless the Lord led him out. We even put aside so much money a year to contribute to the grandchildren's Christian school. We support where he's at without being there ourselves. So it's been disheartening, but also a prideful thing on my part, to believe he is probably judging our walk.

But in the last six months, I am rejoicing and the Lord has changed my mindset on this ... I am rejoicing in the fact that our children are saved, they are seeking God, they live five minutes from us and we have a loving, close relationship. And if we are "without the camp" in our son's eyes ... the Lord has allowed that for all our growth. Three Sundays ago, my "adopted" granddaughter (my boss' child) was sleeping over with my other three grandchildren. Sunday morning, the other three said they didn't want to go to church with Daddy and Mommy. They wanted to have church at home. I called and got permission and our son was fine with it. So the four kids "had church." We had a grand, informal, loving time in the Lord. And I rejoiced that I was free to do this without contention with our families.

Another way grace reigns ... Our son celebrates Christmas with a tree and gifts and lots of fun. We, since he was around 14, don't have a tree because we don't exchange gifts. But we decorate with greenery and red bows, we put up a manger scene, and place poinsettia around. We CELEBRATE Christ. The grandkids help us decide where our charitable giving will go, because in lieu of gifts to them we give to those who cannot give back but need help. We teach the kids that:

*"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, **ye have done it unto me**"*
(Matthew 25:40b.)

So the gifts that we give are to Jesus and we do that by giving to charities. We also tell them that because Jesus is in their hearts, some people ►

elect to give gifts to each other and that that's what their family does. We're teaching them that Christmas is a happy time of year to celebrate Christ. We usually have one family function with all of us in December like going to a kids' movie and dinner out. We have lots of good food at our house Christmas Eve, and turn the lights out and light candles to remember the true Light that came into the world and our hearts, and sometimes the kids do a little play.

The next day we go to our son's house and watch them open their gifts. Though we don't exchange ourselves, we rejoice with their excitement and are happy for them ... we are teaching them grace ... we are teaching them Romans 14 ... we are teaching them to love.

If we weren't at different places in our understanding of Christ, then how could we teach His love together? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. How can these things be "fleshed out" unless they are worked out by our Father's grace in our daily lives. You are so correct when you say, "The doctrine needs to be worked into our soul through the trials, temptations, and struggles we encounter in life." In the laboratory of family living, work relationships, friendships ... we are all progressing as "Christ is formed in us," as we "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." We need not only stand fast in liberty for our own walks, but we need to see that that *liberty is for ALL* of us in the body and we need to extend that respect for God's working in others ... it is not our job but God's to create Himself in others.

Yesterday, I went to Curves. I was small talking with a lady and the conversation went on to dogs. This lady's beloved dog had died in August. As we talked, I knew she needed to just grieve and talk about her loss; and I empathized with her. But as she went on, she said she had no children, and was married eight years, so I realized this was not just another dog lover sharing our love of dogs ... this was a woman who probably lost the object of her maternal affection.

The Lord allowed me to share how I had one son. I had always wanted more children but that was not the Lord's plan. I went on to say that when I was in my mid 30's, I was trusting the Lord to give us more children, but He finally showed me that I needed to have peace if that was not His plan. He sent us an 8 oz. raccoon, which we rescued and nursed for three months. That raccoon was like our little baby. But we had to release him when he was old enough. We worked through rehabilitators to reintroduce him into the wild. I felt like I gave my child away to the wilderness, and I grieved that loss.

I told this lady that the Lord used that raccoon in so many ways. I had been a legalistic Christian and my sister and I were estranged. The Lord used that raccoon to draw my sister back into my life. She came and took movies of him when he was days old, 1-½ months old, and 3 months old ... the last night we had him. In my mourning over the loss of that raccoon, my sister could see that I was just a normal person, who suffered, but still clung to God in my loss. I let my self righteous façade down and let her see I wasn't perfect, and life as a Christian was not perfect, and so I became approachable to her.

Our son, also at that time, was entering his senior year. Watching him get ready to leave our nest, and still desiring so strongly to have more children, I sat on my bathroom floor, sobbing, and my husband found me. I asked him why God would let this little raccoon come into my life when I so wanted more children, and then have to let him go. My precious husband said that "Coonie" needed a Mama and God sent him to me; but he said his own real Mama would have kicked him out of his nest at this age, and it was just time for "Coonie" to have his own life ... the one His Creator granted him. Finally, I learned that loving for the sake of getting something back is not love. Loving and caring for "Coonie" for the joy of his company in my life is not the same as loving and caring for "Coonie" with a *benevolent* love that wishes only the best for him ... even if it meant a broken heart in letting him go. Love is letting your son go to live his own life, rejoicing in the fact that he can go and live it, and that his presence in

your life has been a total gift from God ... not a possession.

So I told this girl at Curves, as her eyes welled with tears over my story, and as my face, I know I could feel it, started lighting up with joy, as I shared the thrust of this testimony, that God is to be glorified in our lives. Even in barrenness. And in Ephesians 5 it says the relationship we have with our husband pictures Christ's love for the church. If God's plan is not children in a marriage, He is still to be glorified in that marriage; and we are to love our husbands and lift them and not be on this quest for children, but to build the family that God's given and rejoice in that. Many women have lousy spouses and we must see how blessed we are to have one that faithful and loving. She seemed to find such peace in that.

God is glorified when we submit to the path He's chosen for us. His love will be a light in this world through us if we allow it. But if we become bitter because our life isn't what we wanted, then He is not glorified. It's the person submitted to Him that can then radiate Him. And we CAN submit to Him because He is too kind to do anything cruel, too wise to make a mistake, too deep to explain Himself, so therefore we trust our awesome, loving God ...

*"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive **glory** and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).*

*"Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and **glory**, and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).*

How could believers get burned at the stake and sing? How could Stephen be stoned and pray for those stoning him? How could I suffer a personal loss and still love and trust my God ... unless His mighty grace did it for me? That is how He is glorified. And when we as believers, love HIM and love others in His strength (for we can't love with true love in our own strength) ... then we

will have peace and doors will be opened to share truth.

Isn't this better than brow-beating someone with what we know? Truth is not really truth unless someone SEES it in your life. We are the epistles ... and the body of Christ so much needs to be expressing Christ in their lives, which in essence is the embodiment of the truth He's made a part of us.

So whether it be grace expressed in family and holidays, or grace shared with a lady at Curves, grace does reign.

I am sorry if this has been too long for you to read, but it was difficult to express where I was coming from and how I LOVED and agreed with and was ministered to by your article. I do hope we hear more of your thoughts and praise the Lord for Brother Clyde and you and the "streams in the desert" in this pilgrimage that encourages and strengthens our walk.

I read this to my husband and he said, "For lack of a better word, isn't it easier 'witnessing' God's love than 'witnessing' how to get saved?" He said that people will be drawn to that salvation when they see HIM. And the thing of it is, when I was talking to that lady, I wasn't even "trying to witness." It just all poured out because loving God is a part of me and it just came out naturally. I didn't end the conversation with are you saved? Can I show you how to be? Do you rightly divide? Do you read the KJV? No, I told her maybe I'd see her around and that I'd be praying for her heart to heal. She was so nice and willing to listen to my ramblings and acted like she hoped we really would see each other again ... because God opened the door for her to hear. If He hadn't, she would have found a way to say, "See ya," and leave. Our last words to each other were that I said I was going to go home and hug my husband because I was reminded again how good a husband he is to me and she, glowingly, said the same thing ... again ... to God be the Glory! – NC

The Believer's Warfare

by Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr

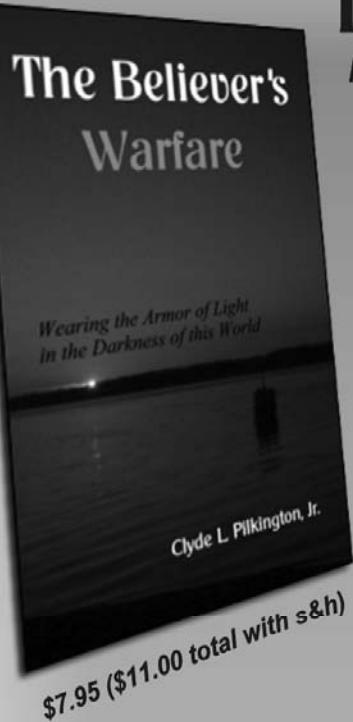
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*The believer is in the middle of an ancient spiritual warfare
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*“... In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among
whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).*



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