



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 42  
Issue 1026

## The Illusion of Free Will

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

by — Wim Janse (1947-2024)

### Key Points:

The Bible does not mention the term “free will,” suggesting that humans do not possess a truly free and unhindered will.....8627  
Humans are either slaves to sin or Christ, indicating that their will is not free but subordinate to their owner. ....8627  
A truly free will would contradict God's sovereignty and omnipotence, as it would imply that humans could act inde-

pendently of God's control. ....8629  
Free will could disrupt prophecies and the process of salvation, which are carried out according to God's will and purpose without human consent.....8629  
God does not need the cooperation of man in order to achieve His goal. ....8634

**I**t is an almost ineradicable fallacy that man is in possession of a *truly* free will.

There is not one suggestion in the entire Word of God that man really has such a free will. Choice and will, yes, that happens – but a free, unlimited, un-hindered will? It is nowhere to be found. Yet those who adhere to the teaching keep claiming that we have one.

Let us take a look and see what we can find to oppose this false teaching.

### THE TERM “FREE WILL” OCCURS NOWHERE IN SCRIPTURE

*That in itself should be a grave warning to us.*

### MAN IS NOT SOVEREIGN

This means that he cannot live on his own and go about freely, without the support of God's provisions and the permission of someone else.

Why? Man is not his own man; he is owned by “someone” else: Sin (Romans 6:6, 17, 20). A slave may do a lot, but practicing a free will is not one of his liberties. It is his owner who decides what the slave does and



where the limits of his freedoms lie. Should the slave decide or declare himself a free man, the master would immediately declare the rights of his ownership, and would prevent this undertaking of the slave and mete out whatever punishment he decided was appropriate.

### THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST ALSO HAS NO FREE WILL

We may apply here the same principle discussed previously, albeit with another owner. We have been bought by Christ (I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). We were transferred from one owner to another (but what an improvement!). That we are slaves of Christ as well can clearly be seen in Paul's position. Even as early as Romans 1:1, he wrote that he is a *doulos*<sup>1</sup> (slave) of his Lord. *The rendering “servant” is too light here. Doulos really means “slave,” in the sense of being owned by someone else.*

*(continued on page 8629)*

1. G1401, SEC.

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### Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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*Scripture education in a weekly format!*

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- 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 freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. 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."

*We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar*

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Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Nathan H. Pilkington, Stephen Hill

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There are more places where Paul presents himself as slave: Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1, etc. He also calls other believers a “slave” of the Lord (II Timothy 2:24)! We are no more than, and no different from, either Paul who wrote it or those who were being addressed.

### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

A being who executes a truly free will, will by definition affect God’s sovereignty. The being is then sovereign itself, isn’t it?

There are “sovereigns” amongst people, kings and queens for instance, who do not have to give account to men for what they do – but that is always in relation to people. In relation to God, and the execution of our will, that is different. He is THE Sovereign, THE One Who does not have to give account to anyone. He is above all and everything, and even kings and queens will have to give account to Him. Should there be even one being which, by having and exercising its own free will, proved to be not subordinate to His will, then that being would be equally sovereign to God. That is impossible.

### THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

The existence of a being with a truly free will would contradict God’s omnipotence. Omnipotence means to be capable of doing anything, but also having power over all. Should any man have a free will, then, by the exercise of that will, he could escape or bypass that all-encompassing power. That would contradict God’s omnipotence.

### PROPHECY

A being with a truly free will could block the outcome of prophecy. The Scriptures know two kinds of prophecies, conditional and unconditional. Of the first type, exemplifying the pattern of “if you do this, then I will do that ...” we can find many examples in Scripture (e.g. Exodus 10:4). The second type, the ones that foretell the coming of the Messiah for example, are well known and unconditional. The very first prophecy in Scripture is about Him (Genesis 3:15).

Should any being have a truly free will, then that being, by exercising that will, could prevent the outcome of such prophecies. Should a being be unable to do such a thing, then his will must not be free. History shows that no one’s will was able to prevent the first coming of the Messiah.

### “FREE WILL” ITSELF

What would happen when two beings, each having a free will, but opposing desires, met each other?

Suppose the following conversation took place between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden:

Adam: “God, I want you to remove the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is no good to me and I don’t like having that commandment hanging over my head.”

God: “I don’t even want to consider that. It is there, and for a good reason. It stays!”

Adam: “But it is my will that it goes!”



32 pages

## The New Birth

### A Compilation

“Born Again” and “The New Birth” are among the many popular terms used by many believers. Although these terms are used by many dear brothers as being synonymous with salvation, they in fact have a very limited application, being used for the nation of Israel, and therefore are not “present truth” for the Body of Christ. Authors include: Richard Jordan, A.E. Knoch, and Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. See [order form](#) under “Compilations.”

Who wins?

The reason for promoting this doctrine of free will is the idea that God cannot bypass man in order to reach His goal, but must ask them for their permission to save them. Doesn't tradition say that "You have to choose for Jesus, otherwise ...?" According to this line of reasoning, that choice must be made of one's own free will, otherwise God would be "forcing" salvation onto each individual.

However, there is something troubling about that assertion.

II Timothy 1:9 proclaims of God:

*Who saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian (CV).*

Question: In what tense is this verb "saves" written? It is done in a very special tense, called the aorist, a Greek form that we do not have in our languages. It means that it was once started, but it is ongoing, and will continue.

When was this saving started? The verse answers that too: "before eonian times" – before time began! The saving was done before you were even in sight, yes, even before Adam was created!

Whose will was mentioned here? God's! It was done in accord with His own purpose! Where do we read here of our free will and our consent and our purpose? Nowhere!

Another example.

Saul of Tarsus was the greatest human enemy of the ecclesia in Israel, shortly after Pentecost. He persecuted (see **ILLUSION**, last page)

## OBITUARY.

### Wim Janse (1947-2024)

With the sense of great loss, we have learned of the death of our dear brother and co-laborer in truth, Wim Janse (March 4). Wim lived in Middelburg, Netherlands since 1974. He struggled with his health almost all of his life and was unable to work for decades. Wim was single all of his life and lived a solitary existence, but devoted himself to the propagation of many truths that we hold precious.

Early in our association we talked frequently on the phone. He had grown up in Vlaardingen, in a reformed environment, but later, in the 1960s, developed a great dislike for everything that had to do with "church." The major breakthrough in his life was when he came to understand the salvation of all, and the special message given to Paul the Apostle. He would come to complete a Concordant Dutch translation of the Scriptures.

"Good night, dear brother. We will see you in the morning!"

His writing in the Bible Student's Notebook include:

- "The Song of the Clay," [BSN 231](#);
- "The Power Of God's Love," [BSN 292](#);
- "God's Two Schools," [BSN 319](#);
- "Who Is a Savior?," [BSN 338](#);
- "What's in a Name? – Canaan," [BSN 355](#);
- "What's in a Name? – Damascus," [BSN 358](#);
- "What's in a Name? – Judah," [BSN 363](#);
- "Bonnie, Bonnie Banks and the Earlier Expectation," [BSN 385](#).

**BSN**

#### TOPICS:

Major: Obituary; Janse, Wim





## Editor's Desk

### The Nature of Our Quotes: Truth from Unexpected Sources

*For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, "For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28).*

— Paul, the Apostle

Message to the Athenians on Mars' Hill

One of the more significant aspects of Paul's message to the idol-worshipping pagans on Mars' Hill is the complete absence of any Scripture citation. Not even once does Paul quote the Scriptures. Yet, maybe just as interesting, the only quotation made by Paul is one of a heathen poet.

Maybe we should learn a little something here from Paul, and not make all of our conversations simply a *rote-and-quote* of Scripture. Maybe, just maybe, like Paul, we should seek to find a place of connection and identification with others – in working to find something that they know and understand, something that is in their frame of reference, something that is important to them – just as Paul did with the Athenians' idol to their "*Unknown God*," and their heathen poetry.

For some readers, perhaps a word of explanation

may be beneficial regarding the nature of some of the quotations used in the *Bible Student's Notebook*. As those who follow these know, we make copious reference to the writings of others in our articles, text boxes and page-toppers, as well as in the *Daily Email Goodies*.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we endorse all of our sources. Like Paul, we will quote just about anybody, even a pagan poet, if the quotation presents itself well to the truth.

It is not even uncommon for us to cite material from *unbelievers*, as a matter of course. We have been known to quote pagans, popes, philosophers, psychologists, songwriters, novelists, playwrights, politicians, athletes, agnostics, atheists, historians, scientists and religionists – *all* of whom we could find stark disagreement on other issues. Thus, the use of their statements is not intended to be an endorsement of all of their words, understandings or actions.

Yet, why do we do so? Because we believe that the *glimmers* of understanding found among those not yet granted faith, or the same realization, that we currently have, provide remarkable inroads with those whom we seek a discourse.

One such example is a recent quotation in a *Daily Email Goodie* by H.A. Ironside (1876-1951). While Ironside was a man of the religious system, with whom we would have much disagreement – a fundamentalist, an institutionalist, a churchman, a trinitarian, a partialist, a pastor, etc. – nonetheless he had this remarkable insight:

Peter and John never get beyond "*forgiveness of*



### Be Likeminded

by — Daniel Andersen

Christ is the basis of Christian unity, and when Paul exhorts believers to be "likeminded" he is not entreating them to comply with the same code or creed, or to conform to the same confession or catechism. Rather he is appealing to them to accept others as Christ, Himself, accepts them.

54 pages

See [order form](#) under "Other Authors."



sins.” Still there is something far higher than that of mere “*pardon*,” and it is of this [“*justification*”] that Paul delighted to treat.

This is a truly amazing statement from such an institutional “insider.” We might even ask ourselves, “How did Ironside even manage to see this?” I realize that some of our own readers and listeners fail to see such a vital distinction between that of “*forgiveness*” and “*justification*,” nor would some be able to have a scriptural discussion regarding their differences.

Truth be told, if we quoted only those with whom we were in complete agreement, we would doubtfully quote anyone. We’d probably not even be able to quote our own writings from the past, for we are constantly learning and growing in our journey toward the truth.

Yet, we quote a plethora of sources, rejoicing to see the testimony of God’s truth acknowledged wherever

we can find them, *even* in the most unlikely places – and although Paul was referring to the testimony of nature when he stated that God “*left not Himself without witness*,” nevertheless, it is indeed true that His testimony is manifest in *all* other areas of life as well, and we are humbled and thankful to be a part of His ongoing testimony.

In the tie of peace,

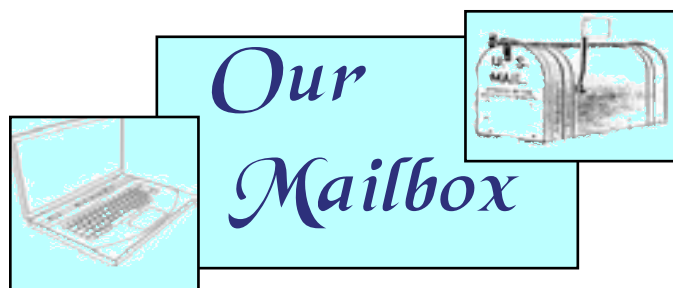


Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.  
The Pilkington Abbey  
Paint, PA

**TOPICS:**

**Major:** Editor’s Desk; Quotes

**Minor:** Growth; Truth



When it comes to obscure, yet correct, teachings, I’ve found you to be spot on. ... May Christ bless your work in furthering the Truth. – **TN**

I lost a big part of my belief system in the last year (after 36 years of study, bible college, pastoring and church planting). ... My present feeling is that I have wasted a large majority of my life laboring under a massive misapprehension. – **Canada**

You and all at the BSN are doing wonderful work and I can’t imagine where I would be today without the superior understanding I have because of you. – **TN**

You come up in my wife’s and my conversation every few days as an example of love. Please know that. You have been so impactful to so many of us. We might not see each other as much these days, but know that we think of you guys often. – **FL**

I don’t think that a day goes by that my thoughts are absent of you and your family. I am in constant thanks for your efforts and for those working with you. ... I’m seeing the distinction of Ephesians and Colossians<sup>1</sup> and our out-resurrection,<sup>2</sup> and am interested in understanding the period you speak of in regard to the 700 years of the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom.<sup>3</sup> – **VA**

When one’s doctrinal understanding is attacked, it brings awareness to it, and can lead to others discovering truth. – **IL**

No one can walk our path, we all are individually unique. But praise God, we are His creation and have our part in His plan, each are being molded by the Potter’s hand, even when it seems the opposite. – **ME**

1. For a look at the uniqueness of Paul’s letters of Ephesians and Colossians, see:  
– [Ephesians and Colossians: Scripture for the Present Administration](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student’s Press (on the [order form](#) under “Pilkington”).
2. [The Out-Resurrection: A Compilation on the Prior-Expectation of the Secret Administration](#), Bible Student’s Press (on the [order form](#) under “Compilations”).
3. [Rightly Dividing Israel’s Prophetic Kingdom – With Special Emphasis on The Overlooked Pre-Millennial “Kingdom of the Heavens” \(A Comprehensive Compilation\)](#), editors: Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., André Sneider, Bible Student’s Press (on the [order form](#) under “Compilations”).



I cannot even begin to tell you how the Universalist position of understanding has given answers to a plethora of questions I've always had! As God plows up what I thought was truth before, it never ceases to amaze me how I anticipate the words on each and every page of all these books that you're producing! Each author aiding in strength to my current limited understanding of things. OH! WHAT A JOURNEY! At times it is overwhelming, yet in a good way, bolstering my faith! ... God bless Study Shelf and all your staff! – **NE**

I thank Dad for bringing us together and I thank Him for you being who you are. You are a compassionate and loving man who demonstrates God's incredible love and grace in your life. – **PA**

I saw your piece on "Giving thanks for Obama."<sup>4</sup> ... With your permission, I'm thinking of changing the president's name to Biden and running it in an abbreviated form as an ad in the local paper. Thank you.

I'm very tired of Christians who equate the gospel with the Republican party.<sup>5</sup> They are perverting the gospel. – **Internet**

4. [Editor:] [Bible Student's Notebook 270](#); it can also be found in the book:  
– [World Affairs and National Politics: And the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under "Compilations").
5. [Editor:] See,  
– "God Is Not a Republican," Ken Eckerty (Patriotism and Meddling in Politics), in *World Affairs and National Politics* (*ibid.*).



*Militaries in Context and the Ecstasy of Ecstasies*, by Jeff Bohlender [BSN 1020] – wow, he has such a fine grip on what is happening throughout ALL of creation; he writes with such convincing clarity of what God has shown him. Wonderful and encouraging it is to come to realize that we can simply *rest* in the Placer's infinite wisdom. – **IN**

I have really been blessed by your books and am reading them every day. I dropped out of church many years ago because of what they believe about eternal punishment. I have always known in my heart that a loving God would never do something like that. – **FL**

**BSN**



## *The Companion Bible*

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

An in-depth study Bible for those who seek to know and understand God's Word. Extensive marginal notes with appropriate Hebrew and Greek analysis provide alternate translations of critical passages and call attention to other relevant texts. Detailed outlines focus on the context and significance of each book while emphasizing how each part fits into the whole. Helps include: Nearly 200 appendices of Hebrew words and their use, charts, parallel passages, maps, lists of proper names, calendars, and timelines. Keyed to the marginal notes, providing additional information on genealogies, synonyms, historical and a wide range of other important topics.

"So conservative are the notes and appendixes that, if they are right, the great bulk of the Biblical scholarship of our day has been wasted labor." – Review of *The Companion Bible*, Part II, in *The Expository Times*, February, 1911.  
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**ILLUSION** (continued from page 8630)

cuted this ecclesia in a horrible way. One day he was on his way to Damascus, with the powers of the religious order of his day behind him, intent on teaching a lesson to the believers in Christ in that city.

Then suddenly he is startled by a burst of light, a voice and a question. Saul falls on his face and can only say, "Who are You, Lord?" That was the turning point in the life of the man we know as Paul.

Question: Where was the free will that Saul is supposed to have possessed? As the greatest opponent of Christ among mankind, he must have had the right to exercise his free will! (God is not allowed to use force, otherwise there would have been no exercise of free will on the part of the individual!) Or was that supposed "free" will suddenly not as "free" as many think it is, nor as "free" as it had been ten minutes before? Is a free will not able to stay free in an environment where God's Spirit is present in the full power of the glorified Christ? If not, is that "free" will then truly "free"?

Where in this story do we hear God asking Saul to convert?

Where does it say that Saul asked for forgiveness?

Where does it say that Paul first prayed the "sinner's prayer?"

Where in this account did God need the cooperation of man in order to achieve His goal?

Not a word can be found about it!

Scripture presents us with many more examples which prove that it is not man who seriously seeks for God (Romans 3:11), but that it is God Who seeks man! God does not use force, but God convinces, and He does that with so much conviction that no one can resist Him. No, God does not force, but He urges and will successfully persuade all, for God is LOVE! **BSN**

(edited)

**TOPICS:**

**Major:** Free Will; Sovereignty

**Minor:** Love; Omnipotence; Salvation

HAVING A CELESTIAL CALLING, WE CANNOT SET THE TIME FOR A HEAVENLY OCCURRENCE BY AN EARTHLY CHRONOMETER. ALL CHRONOLOGY IS CONFINED TO THE SPHERE "UNDER THE SUN," THAT IS, TERRESTRIAL, ON THE EARTH. IN THE CELESTIAL SPHERE THERE ARE NO TIME-KEEPERS, NO DAYS, NO NIGHTS, NO MONTHS AND NO YEARS. THIS IS WHERE WE BELONG, IN THIS SECRET ADMINISTRATION.

A.E. KNOCH (1874-1965)



72 pages

## *The Divine Activation of Faith, and the Myth of Free Will*

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

What is faith? Who is a believer? Is faith a matter of human choice, or is it a gift from God? Do those who have faith understand and believe everything correctly? Or, do they experience areas or degrees of unbelief? Can one be weak or strong in faith? Is there room in faith for growth? These are among the important questions that are considered in this work.

See [order form](#) under "Pilkington."