



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 103

### *Seek and Set* Those Things Which Are Above

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“Seek those things which are above”  
“Set your affection on things above”

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

Paul tells us to do two things regarding “those things which are above.” First he tells us to, “**Seek** those things which are above.” Then he tells us to, “**Set** your affection on things above.”

There are some glorious “things that are above” that we are to “seek” out. Then after we have found them, we need to “set” our affection on them.

Our English word “seek” has a meaning of,

“To go in search or quest of; to look for; to search for by going from place to place.”<sup>1</sup>

Its etymology means, “to follow; for to seek is to go after, and the primary sense is to advance, to press, to drive forward.”<sup>2</sup>

Our English word “set” has a meaning of,

“To put, place or fix in any situation.”<sup>3</sup>

The Greek word<sup>4</sup> is also translated as *savor*,<sup>5</sup> *think*,<sup>6</sup> *mind*,<sup>7</sup> *regard*,<sup>8</sup> and *care*.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, Paul does not leave us in the dark concerning “those things which are above.” He has revealed them to us, planting them

*(continued on page 1091)*

3. Ibid.

4. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Greek #5426, *phroneo*

5. Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33.

6. Acts 28:22; Romans 12:3; I Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 1:7.

7. Romans 8:5; 12:16; II Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:10; Philippians 2:2, 5; 3:15, 16, 19; 4:2.

8. Romans 14:6.

9. Philippians 4:10.

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1. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

2. Ibid.

Dear Siblings,

You need to know a little something of my heart. Every issue of the **Bible Student's Notebook** that goes out only reminds me of the honored privilege that I have been given to do this work. Your reception of the **BSN** is a humbling encouragement to me. I am often moved to tears as I read your letters and notes to me.

Distributing Bible study materials has indeed been a great passion of my life. I have been publishing periodicals since 1976. This year we have been entrusted by God with a more enduring form of publishing. In addition to our **Daily Email Goodies**, and our weekly publishing of periodicals (**Bible Student's Notebook**, **Bible Student's Commentary**, and **Due Benevolence**), we have released 18 books since December.

By God's grace this is just the beginning of what is firmly fixed upon our hearts. We currently have 12 book projects that are in various stages. We have more than 20 upcoming projects ready for work when these are done. All of this together is at the root of who God has made me, as a member of Christ's Body.

Our hearts are *very* humble and tender about this work. I am not a writer in any real sense of the word. I write from pure passion. My family and close brothers labor hard with me to make my writings readable.

In all of this we must give unceasing glory to God. We surely have no personal resources *sufficient* for these undertakings – spiritually, physically, or materially.

*"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God"*  
(II Corinthians 3:5).

Sometimes the saints tell me that they call just to hear me laugh with them over the phone. What a joy is this spontaneous sharing of our divine life; but laughter is not all that there is in the life of God. We often find ourselves laboring with tears. The strain of the circumstances of life and the spiritual battle in which we are engaged is ever present with us – that constant undercurrent to simply "give up."

I am fully aware of how weak I am. I often struggle with bouts of fainting fits as I war the faith fight. Yet God is honored in all of this as we are "*pressed out of measure*." This is indeed His method of working in our lives. He has ordained it to be this way. His is a "*not many*" calling, and He uses "*foolish*," "*weak*," "*base*" and "*despised*" things as His divine instruments.

*"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many (continued on page 1100)*

## **Bible Student's Notebook**

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This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

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## **PATRIARCHS**

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

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throughout his writings for us to “seek” out. This is our purpose here, to identify from Paul’s letters a few of “those things which are above,” so that we may follow the admonition of our apostle to “seek” and “set.” Five of these are right here in our “seek and set” passage.

## **JESUS CHRIST**

“... where Christ sitteth ...” (Colossians 3:1).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be the object of our seeking and setting. He is seated at the Right Hand of God. We will never exhaust the richness of His person and work. This was the passion of Paul, as his heart revealed itself to the Philippian saints.

*“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death” (Philippians 3:7-10).*

## **THE RIGHT-HAND THRONE**

“... sitteth on the right hand ...” (Colossians 3:1).

We are to seek out and set our affections on God’s Right-Hand throne. Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ seated there; this is the place of our present position and standing in Him, as well as our future and final destiny with Him. Because we are the sons of God, we are His heirs as well,

and of course the Lord Jesus Christ’s joint-heirs. We are heir to all that the Father possesses. We share these riches with our Savior and Head.

*“We are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16b-17a).*

*“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).*

## **OUR FATHER**

“... of God” (Colossians 3:1).

The God of the universe is to be the focus of our seeking and setting. He is not just the universe’s Almighty, He is our loving and precious Father.

*“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:2).*

*“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).*

*“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).*

Because of our identity is in the Lord Jesus Christ, we now can speak the language of a son!

*“And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).*

## OUR LIFE

*“... your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life ...” (Colossians 3:3, 4).*

We are to seek out and set our affections on our *real* life. The Life of Christ is our life. We are alive with Divine-life, through Him.

*“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).*

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6).*

## GLORY

*“... appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).*

The final example that Paul gave us in this passage of what we are to seek out and set our affections on is the glory of God. This too is our final destiny. We who had *“come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23), will *“appear with Him in glory.”*

*“By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).*

*“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory ...” (I Corinthians 15:42-43a).*

*“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eter-*

*nal glory” (II Timothy 2:10).*

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).*

*“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).*

*“And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory” (Romans 9:23).*

*“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (I Corinthians 2:7).*

*“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18).*

*“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).*

*“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (II Thessalonians 2:12).*

*“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 2:14).*

Do not be distracted from what is *real*, by the make-believe of this world; its system and course. Instead, diligently **“seek”** out the *“things that are above,”* *“setting”* your affection on them. ■

# Ministry

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“By love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

**M**inistry is often equated to things. For instance, you are said to have a ministry if you are functioning within the system of organized religion; and there is much for you to focus upon: there is the “bus ministry,” the “visitation ministry,” the “radio ministry,” the “music ministry,” the “Sunday School ministry,” the “printing ministry,” etc. If we have served the institution or organization well, we usually feel that we have served the Lord well.

Yet ministry is really our personal service to people. As members of the Body of Christ we are to “by love serve one another.” We have not been called to merely serve an organization – we are not here to serve things, however noble they may appear to be.

Do not misunderstand; things can be used as tools to help minister effectively to others. However, very often we lose sight of the purpose of our ministry (which is to others) while placing our focus on the structured activity of an organized institution. Frequently what is called “ministry” is the service of the organization; it is simply busy-work which satisfies Adamic flesh. (Such “service” is repeatedly the means of recognition for a job “well done,” while those who serve other members of the Body on a very personal level receive little, if any, public recognition.)

## The Definition of Ministry

Lawrence O. Richards provides for us a good working definition of ministry.

“... When the New Testament speaks of ministry ... it is a ministry of all believers to each other ... The ministry is to be mutual. The ministry is the function of the whole people of God. ... ‘The ministry’ is thus divided among all the members of the body of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Lawrence O. Richards, *A New Face for the Church* (p.

Noah Webster gives the etymology of our English word as:

“to serve, wait, attend; to give; to afford; to supply.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the Greek words used to translate our English words, James Strong<sup>3</sup> uses such definitions as:

“Attendance (as a servant); aid; service; to be an attendant, i.e., to wait upon; to run errands; a waiter; under oarsman; assistant”

The various Greek words for ministry are translated as follows: administered, administration(s), deacons, minister(s), ministered, ministering, ministration, ministry, office, office of a deacon, relief, servant(s), serveth, service and serving.

## Organizational Ministry

“Status (‘rank’ or ‘level of importance’) ... is ascribed on the basis of organizational performance. ... We tend to think of a ‘good Christian’ as one who attends church Sunday morning and evening and on prayer meeting night, who teaches, or serves on a board. Dedication to Christ is measured by the number of nights a person is out involved in church activities! ...

“As long as Christians define themselves by their role in an organization rather than in their basic role as a Christian, they will not become what they are in Christ. Growth will remain stunted.”<sup>4</sup>

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98-100).

2. Noah Webster, *The American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.  
3. James Strong, Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance.  
4. Lawrence O. Richards, *A New Face for the Church* (p. 48-49).

## **Biblical Usage of the word “Ministry”**

Now let us briefly look at how the Bible uses the concept of ministry. Here are some of what the Bible teaches:

### **Domestic ministering to guests**

(Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 4:39; 8:3; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; 22:26, 27; John 12:2)

### **Supplying the needs of life**

(Matthew 25:44; 27:55; Mark 15:41; Acts 6:1, 2; 11:29; 12:25; 19:22; II Timothy 1:16-18; Romans 15:25; II Corinthians 8:4, 19, 20; 9:1, 12, 13, Philippians 2:25; Philemon 13)

### **Sharing the Word of God**

(Luke 1:2; Acts 6:4; II Corinthians 4:1; I Peter 1:12)

### **Use of spiritual gifts “to profit withal”**

(Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:5; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 4:17; I Peter 4:10,11)

## **Paul’s apostleship and message to the gentiles**

(Acts 20:24; 21:19; Romans 11:13; II Corinthians 5:18; 11:8; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23, 25; I Timothy 1:12; II Timothy 4:11)

As seen in all of the above references, ministry is again and again shown to be directed toward PEOPLE:

*“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied”* (I Corinthians 16:15-17).

*“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”* (Hebrews 6:10).

May each of us reconsider our service to and for God. Are we simply busy with the structure of man-made institutions or are we really ministering? ■

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chapter 2, on a Jewish feast day in fulfillment of prophecy, it is evident that God did not choose to reveal its exact historical beginning, other than with the ministry of His chosen vessel Paul the apostle (I Timothy 1:15-16; II Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 1:1-3).

If we view the professing “church” of today, with its divisions and subdivisions as being the true Bible church, we reveal the fact that we have a misconception of the Body of Christ, and need to do some serious studying. Today with all the cults and modernism, all (believers and unbelievers) are urged to join the professing “church,” that is, join one of the various religious organizations.

Yet no one can join the only and true assembly, the Body of Christ. It is the work of God to admit believers into the Body of Christ.

*“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body ...”* (I Corinthians 12:13).

*“There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Let us think on these things.

# *Mutual Ministry of the Saints*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“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).*

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;” (Ephesians 5:18-19).*

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).*

**T**he Body of Christ is in dire need of mutual ministry. For far too long the Body has had a one-sided ministry. This “ministry” is a result of an artificial erection of a non-scriptural dual-classification of the saints: the prominent service class – the clergy, and the quiet receiving class – the laity.

This is even true of many of who have left the religious system. Unfortunately, it is far easier to get out of the system, than it is to get the system out of us! Often when saints attempt to reclaim their identity from the religious system there is the tendency to continue following, consciously or unconsciously, the course of that system.

Even those brave enough to leave the traditional gathering of the system often mimic the system that they have left. “Services” often start with some “congregational” singing, moves to the “special singing” and then on to the highlight – the “teaching service” – a religious monologue. Of course when the “teaching service” is over this brings an end to the official “service.”

What are these gatherings called? Can we not hear, “It was good to see you at *Bible Study*?” Is this what Body life is to be reduced or limited to – *Bible Study*? Granted, the study of the Bible is paramount to the believer’s life, especially on the *individual* level; for Paul’s instruction is to “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” Study is *primarily* a personal and private matter before the Lord. Our collected activity is not study, but that of *mutual ministry* – “*teaching and admonishing one another.*” Tradition would have it otherwise!

The Church which is Christ’s Body desperately needs *mutual ministry* if we are to believe the verses above. Paul tells us that there is an “*effectual working in the measure of every part*” that *alone* can make “*increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*”

However, this life of God in His Body has been dammed up! Only a trickle of it manages to break out over the top of traditional religious “service,” and the system assures that it will

stay that way! The time has come for us not only to reclaim our divine identity as the Ecclesia – the Church – but to recover our privilege of *mutual ministry*.

Do any question the falling short of the ideal of *mutual ministry*?

The prevalent understanding that is spawned by the religious system's method and "service" of gathering is *primarily* that of *getting* something. The laity is to be the receiving class, while the prominent clergy are to be the service class. The laity submits itself to the clergy so that they may receive *something* that will last and get us through until the next gathering. You will hear the laity talking about "getting their batteries charged" or "their buckets filled." Thus the religious "service" is designed to be *self-centered*. The ministry of the Body of Christ has somehow become a *getting* meeting rather than a very *giving* lifestyle of *mutual ministry*.

Is this the spirit of Christ living in His Body? Would not Christ's life living in every believer be centered and focused on *giving*? Is it not indeed "*more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35)?

This "empty bucket" theory, thrust upon us by the system, runs contrary to the divine ministry of the "*measure of every part*." Is the believer's "bucket" ever really *empty*? Has the believer nothing to minister to his fellow? Are we under the delusion that we are *empty* when Christ *Himself* is ever resident in us? Not only Christ, but all that He brought with Him! – *all* His riches: "*every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*" (Philemon 6).

Now, the enemy would have us believe that we have nothing, that we are *empty*! Yet all of this is *only* a selfish sense of emptiness – a false perception, a *non-divine* viewpoint, a *faithless*

feeling, a religious fantasy. The fullness is resident, we simply fail to acknowledge it; for Paul's complete statement is:

*"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."* (Philemon 6).

Any believer can be "awakened" to his fullness by acknowledging what God has said. When we by faith believe that we already have a deposit in us, then there can be edification for God's Holy Temple!

*"... According to the effectual working in **the measure of every part**, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Ephesians 4:16b).

*"... According as God hath dealt to every man **the measure of faith**"* (Romans 12:3).

The believer must realize, by faith, that this "*measure*" of which Paul writes is already *in them*. This "*measure*" from God is worthy of ministry. One must avoid the damming up of the divine resources. The living of Divine Life is not about believers with "empty buckets" waiting to be *filled*: it is about the lives of the many-membered Christ pouring out their "*measures*" upon each other unto mutual fullness.

Do not be satisfied with religious structure. Live daily in Divine Life. Live in your *measure*. Pour your *measure* upon others. Eagerly receive the *measure* of Christ in others. Enjoy a life filled with the divine expression of the giving and receiving of *mutual ministry*. This is our true identity. This is who we are. This is who God has made us as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Do not allow anything or anyone to diminish your *measure* from God. Live in its fullness. ■

# *The Mystery:* **The Body of Christ**

by – A.A. Sandoz  
(1888-1974)

*“Now unto Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of **the mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25).*

**T**he true church of the present dispensation of Grace is called the Body of Christ – The One Body – The Church which is His Body. All of this is Pauline terminology as no other Bible writer employs these terms, and is included in the term “*my gospel*” (Romans 12:4-5; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18, 24-27).

The Body of Christ is composed of only believers, those who have heard (with the heart) the gospel of the grace of God and have by faith responded to its message. In other words, all who have trusted in Christ for salvation. The simple message of the gospel is that:

*“... Christ died for our sins ... and that He was buried ... and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).*

The Body of Christ is a new divine purpose – a wholly new thing – the **new man** of Ephesians 2:15 – the **Body** of Ephesians 3:6 – the **new creation** of II Corinthians 5:17. The Gentiles were not joined to an existing Jewish body at Acts chapter 2 (this would render Paul’s words meaningless), but a **new Body** of the twain (Jew and Gentile) through the proclaiming of the gospel of the Grace of God, or Paul’s “*my gospel*” (I Timothy 1:11).

God in time past had given up the Gentiles (Romans 1:24, 26, 28) and during the Acts period He set aside Israel (temporarily) concluding them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all (Romans 11:32). Then sending forth His chosen

vessel Paul, with the gospel of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ (on the cross) reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins unto them (II Corinthians 5:19).

This is the ministry for believers in this age of Grace according to II Corinthians 5:14-21. Not the so-called commission of Mark 16 and Matthew 28:19-20 which is the commission to the twelve apostles, applying to Israel and the Gentile nations. Many of our 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians confuse the gospel of the Kingdom with the gospel of the Grace of God, which results in the present day religious denominational confusion. Today such terms as “my church” – “our church” – “your church,” etc. are commonly used, which seems to rule out the Holy Spirit and would indicate that man has taken over His functions.

The true church is not a man made building or organization, in spite of Webster’s definition which defines as: either the body of members or the building. Nowhere in the Bible has God delegated man to construct a building and call it so and so church, and receive members into it through some ritual or ceremony, which could never add an unbeliever to the only true One Body. Also, the building or meeting place is not the church, nor is it the house of God in the dispensation of Grace. We learn from Acts 17:24-25 that God “dwelleth **not** in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men’s hands.”

It is tragic and an inexcusable mistake to place the historical beginning of the Body of Christ at Acts

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# *Religion's Increase Of Sin*

and

## **Our Freeman Status in Christ**

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.”*  
(II Corinthians 11:20).

**O**ver the centuries, religion, to keep its hold on the masses, has made many more things “sinful” than really are. By doing so, religion keeps increasing the “need” of itself. In fact, if we have had religious influence pressed upon us in our lives, many things that we have known as “sin” may indeed not be so.

Sin, in a biblical sense is that which is an assault against God (e.g. worship of other gods, the exaltation of one’s self or others equal to or above God), or against man (i.e., that which is harmful or hurtful to others).

Religion always seeks to make new lists of “sins.”<sup>1</sup> It keeps adding to the “sin catalog.” How many things do we regard as “sin,” that in all actuality are only the chains of religion? If something is said to be a “sin” long and hard enough, does that make it a sin?

### **THE USE OF OUR LIBERTY**

Under grace we are free to apply the things that we learn, and walk in them, so long as we do not hurt, or become a stumbling block to others. This is the principle of love – because ...

*“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”* (Romans 13:10).

1. I have heard strange lists of “sins” over the years, such as: window shopping, reading the newspaper, men shaking hands with women, playing cards, playing billiards, going swimming, wearing wire-rim glasses, men parting their hair down the middle, buying gas on Sunday, wearing shorts, chewing gum, and wearing cowboy boots; but even some of the more popularly accepted lists of “sins” are to be made subject to the scrutiny of the Word of God.

Here enters the context and principles of Romans chapter 14, and the importance of a walk of *personal* faith and *clear* conscience.

We are free to exercise our liberty in Christ insofar as it does not offend the weaker brother’s conscience and destroy him.

Principles that we could use and apply in specific circumstances:

- Scriptural Understanding

We should seek a scriptural understanding regarding any particular issue. The intent would be to provide clarity of conscience and a true act of personal faith.

- Deliberate Actions

We should seek to gain clear understanding of our individual purposes and intents prior to any actions. Our individual actions should always be:

- (1) In light of our personal consciences

*“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned ... Holding faith, and a good conscience ...”* (I Timothy 1:5, 19).

- (2) In light of our genuine desires (as well as likes and dislikes).

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

Our actions should be deliberate and with forethought, rather than a mindless spur-of-the-moment “going along.” This is what the Christian life is intended to be – so that any action can be done heartily as unto the Lord.

- **Genuine Respect**

We should respect one another and not *trespass* each other’s personal faith and consciences.

These principles would allow us to reflect our walk in liberty, as an act of worshipful faith *and* a walk in love.

## **OUR FREEMAN STATUS IN CHRIST**

We have learned that even the restrictions of the law are, under grace, fulfilled in one word – love. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love will never hurt or defraud one’s neighbor.

*“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”* (Romans 13:8-10).

*“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”* (Galatians 5:13,14).

As member’s of Christ’s Body, we are neighbors.

*“... Speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another”* (Ephesians 4:25).

Love is the fulfilling of the law. This is why to the pure, all things are pure, and there is nothing unclean of itself. This is why love is eternally bound

to grace. Grace is the absence of law, and there is no need for a law where love is genuinely present ... *“and the greatest of these is love.”*

*“Unto the pure all things are pure ...”* (Titus 1:15a).

*“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself ...”* (Romans 14:14a).

*“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not”* (I Corinthians 10:23).

*“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”* (I Corinthians 13:13).

## **THE BASIS OF FAITH AND GRACE**

It is extremely important that we remember that love (as well as *all* other areas of our lives) is based in faith and grace! These are indeed the foundational principles set forth in Romans chapter 14.

### **Faith**

There is the principle of personal faith. Our walk before the Lord is to be one based upon faith! This faith is to be *personal*, and without the dominion of men.

*“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23).

*“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind”* (Romans 14:5).

*“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God”* (Romans 14:22).

*“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand”* (II Corinthians 1:24).

Our love is to be one borne out of personal faith!

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## Grace

Then there is the principle of divine grace. God does not want us to judge each other regarding our *personal* faith. This is a real test of grace in our lives. It is easy to love and accept those who mirror our beliefs and practices – that takes little if any grace; but to love and accept a brother who has differing beliefs and practices requires a work of God's grace in our hearts. What it really takes is the willingness to give up our assumed dominion over the lives of others.

*"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).*

*"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth ..." (Romans 14:4).*

*"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).*

God has called us to a life of grace, not law – a life that proceeds from the heart and love, not from externals. Do we by grace afford others the liberty to study the Bible for themselves? Do we permit them to come to their own position of *personal* faith before God? Do we allow them to walk in accordance with that faith to His glory as an act of worship? Do we let them live their lives heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men? ■

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*noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Corinthians 1:26-29).*

*"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10).*

*"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians 12:9).*

*"For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you" (II Corinthians 13:4).*

*"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (II Corinthians 2:4).*

Your brother,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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