



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 107

What if Some Do Not Believe?

by – S. J. M.

Paul the Apostle asks the question,

“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid” (Romans 3:3).

“If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (II Timothy 2:13).

It should always be kept in mind, that a thing must be true before it is a subject of belief, and if so, belief of, or unbelieving, cannot effect the thing itself.

For example, one might believe at night that the sun would never appear again – nay, the whole world might believe it, and while this would have a very important influence upon the people themselves, it would in no wise prevent the sun's coming forth again in beauty and glory.

So, in relation to God's promises relating to man's final destiny – the belief or disbelief of them cannot affect the truth itself. God cannot deny himself – He is faithful and true; and the plain difference is that while the believer enters into rest, rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, the unbeliever is in darkness, doubt and gloom, shut out from the light and glory of the Gospel of peace and love.

Herein lies one great error of common religionists – they suppose that if they believe that Christ is their Savior, He is their Savior – otherwise that He is not so. Well, if He is not the Savior of unbelievers, the unbeliever is called upon to believe a lie in order to be saved. Jesus certainly died to save all before any believed on Him, and all the promises of future redemption were given while almost the entire world was lying in wickedness.

God is the Savior of all men in the sense of eternal salvation in the future world, whether they believe it or not, and those who heed the promise of his grace are privileged to look forward with fair prospects to the spirit land, and take hold of the joys of heaven by anticipation.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (I John 5:10-11).

Now can any one suppose that if all had not eternal life in Christ the disbelief of the fact would make God a liar? If it were not, then, any man who said it was not would only tell the plain truth. But being true, by promise – independent of human belief – faith gives to each one the witness in himself that the gift will be received at the proper time. It belongs to us to believe with all the heart: to stagger not at the promises of God, and to enter into that rest which can be found no where else.

Universalist Herald and Progressionist

October 7, 1859

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start of a new life for the graduate. Parties are focused on and full of life. Doesn't that description describe... Christianity as well? Its essence is a celebration of divine life. You were dead, but in Christ Jesus you have been made alive! It's appropriate to [*"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD"*] and to *"serve the LORD with gladness ..."* (Psalm 100:1, 2). In other words, it's time for the church to rise up and have a party! Where grace rules, celebration is the order of the day ...

Our activity is always spiritual when it is animated by the life of Jesus Christ within us. A salesman who is totally depending on Jesus to control him will be as involved in spiritual activity as a pastor preaching in church on Sunday morning. In fact, compared to a pastor who preaches from his own self-sufficiency, a salesman's activity could actually be *more* spiritual!

It's not the deed, but the source of the deed that makes an action a spiritual one. Every Christian has the opportunity to celebrate Jesus in *every* activity of life. Anything we can't trust Jesus to perform through us shouldn't be done. If it is an action which the Lord empowers, then it is a godly action. Our society needs more men ... who will go into the marketplace and demonstrate what a man intoxicated with Jesus looks like ...

Our God is a party God! Those who feel that the idea of Christians "partying" seems somehow irreverent might benefit from a study of what the Bible says about joy in the kingdom of God. The Lord said, *"Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart"* (Isaiah 65:14)! One of the last things Jesus told His disciples concerned having a festive heart: *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). In His final prayer before going to the cross, Jesus prayed *"that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves"* (John 17:13).

May the church once again rise up in celebration! We have been forgiven of our sins (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus Christ is our very life (Colossians 3:4). Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39). We will always triumph in life (II Corinthians 2:14). It's time to lighten up and party!

Grace Rules
Pages 180-188

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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Enjoying God

by – Steve McVey

The seventeenth century reformers said that “man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” **Enjoying God is an integral part of the life of one in whom grace rules.** Legalism knows little about *enjoying* God and resents those who do ...

Luke describes the reaction of the legalist in [the story of the prodigal son in] Luke 15:25-28.

There is no bigger party pooper than a legalist. He is so focused on performance that he can’t understand the kind of grace that would cause a father to receive a person whose activity hadn’t been as admirable as his own. He relates to others with a condescending attitude, judging them by the standard of his own life. His performance may look good, but inwardly he is wasting away because his legalism has robbed him of authentic joy in the Christian life. He has no time for music and dancing; there’s work to be done! The devil never takes a break, why should he? A legalist is never a genuinely happy person. When he sees others dance to the music, he can’t stand it.

This older brother [of the prodigal] bore the chief characteristics of a legalist. First, he separated himself from his younger brother because the latter didn’t live up to the standards embraced by himself. He refused to be involved in the same party as his brother. Second, his relationship to his father revolved around doing the right thing and not breaking his commandments. He said, “*Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment*” (Luke 15:29). He knew no intimacy with his father because his whole focus was on behavior. Finally, he resented the grace that his father showed to the prodigal. He pointed out his own faithfulness and said, “*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*” Legalists sometimes find it hard to even call one a brother who doesn’t conform to their own standards. The elder son called him “*this son of yours.*” Such legalists apparently believe it’s wrong to unconditionally accept a sinning Christian. After all, when we do so, we are condoning his behavior! ...

The attitude of this elder brother reflects that held by

legalists today. Yet the heart of the prodigal’s father seems to parallel that of our Heavenly Father. He loves to celebrate when someone comes to him in full repentance. **Faith and fun are not in opposition to one another;** even under the old covenant, God made provision for His people to celebrate.

“And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. ... And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,” (Deuteronomy 14:23, 26).

Contrary to the opinion of some people, **God loves fun!** Back ... before the foundation of time, God determined to host a universal party. It was to be a party in honor of His Son, Jesus. He would create man for the purpose of sharing His life with him, thus bringing him into the eternal party taking place in the heavenlies ... We could, in a sense, say that Christianity is a party celebrating Jesus Christ.

The father of the prodigal said, “*It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found*” (Luke 15:32). When a dead person comes to life, that’s a reason to celebrate. The Bible teaches in Ephesians 2:1 that there was a time when you were “*dead in trespasses and sins;*” but now you have been made alive by Jesus Christ. This is a reason to celebrate!

Some Christians today seem to have forgotten that the activity of the early church revolved around *fellowship*. The Greek word for that is *koinonia*. It wouldn’t be inappropriate to use the word *party* as a contemporary paraphrase of the word. Many contemporary parties celebrate life: a birthday party celebrates the years a person has lived; anniversary parties celebrate a couple’s life together; a graduation party celebrates the

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The Poison of Religion

by – Steve McVey

I'm not big on religion; in fact, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Maybe it's because I swallowed so much of it for so many years. I was a pastor of local churches for over 20 years. I've served up and eaten every dutiful dish of dead doctrine you can imagine. My problem wasn't a lack of sincerity. To the contrary, I was very sincere. But then so was Paul when he was persecuting the church, all the while thinking he was doing God a big favor. Don't think that I'm saying I have renounced my faith in Jesus Christ. My disdain for religion hasn't diminished my love for Jesus Christ and His church. Rather, the opposite has occurred. Since God's grace has leveled the religious wall which partially obscured my view of Christ, I've come to love Him more deeply and serve Him more fervently than ever before.

... I took the liberating gospel of God's grace and mixed the wild gourds of religious performance in the same pot with it. The gourds came from a wild vine out in the field. Grace doesn't grow in a wild field. It is cultivated only in an infinite garden of love planted and nurtured by God Himself. The idea of religious performance is a wild plant that poisons the grace of God and causes it to cease to be edible, although I did eat and serve it to my churches for many years. The tragedy of this kind of poison is that it won't kill you, but will be just toxic enough to keep you sick for the rest of your life.

The underlying foundation of all religion is performance, whether it's a tribal dance around a campfire to satisfy the fire god, or a dead religious activity performed week after week by an evangelical Christian with the intent of impressing his God. It's all religious performance, and God isn't impressed by our performance. What impresses Him is faith. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"* (Hebrews 11:6). He

couldn't care less about religious ritual void of life. God is in the business of life. Nothing else interests Him. When it is all said and done, God will either raise dead things or else ultimately separate Himself from them as far as He can get. He is interested in living relationships, not dead religion.

... The announcement of the gospel of grace includes the good news that God wants to deliver us from religion. He has extended His grace for the purpose of rescuing us from a lifestyle of futile, feeble efforts to make ourselves acceptable to Him. The essence of religion is man's attempt to somehow convince himself that he has jumped through enough hoops for God to give him the approving nod. It's the way we try to validate our own self-worth, but our acts of self-righteousness actually separate us from the very goal we seek to achieve. Religion is poison because it kills any opportunity one will ever have to experience genuine intimacy with God. Religion is a prostitute having sex with a man and telling him it's love, when all the while, deep in his heart, the man knows better. Religion offers the false hope that somehow there is something we can do to impress God enough to cause Him to accept us on the basis of our actions. Religion is what rushes in to fill the vacuum created by the absence of personal intimacy with God.

... Yet many believers, who by divine sovereignty have been brought out of Egypt and miraculously placed on The King's Highway, have now filled their tank with the gasoline of religion and their engine with the oil of self-effort, and think they are on their way to the land of victorious living. They are often making good speed, but what they don't know is that they are driving in circles. They are pleased with their performance, but don't know they are going nowhere fast.

... Doing our part – that’s the toxic element in religion. Religion is an insidious virus that infects the Christian and ruins what would otherwise be a clean bill of health. We simply can’t believe that God expects nothing of us after He delivers us from the sins of our own Egyptian bondage. Surely we must owe Him something despite the fact that any attempt to place a price on a priceless gift is to disparage its value. To enter a life of victory without any effort on our part? That’s too simplistic. So it was with Israel: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

... There are at least two similarities between Israel and religious performers that are too glaring to ignore.

... *Both are characterized by a struggle to experience victory* ... [T]hose today who desire to experience the victorious life ... sincerely try to attain this life through religious efforts, but a successful, consistent walk with Christ seems to elude them constantly. No matter how hard they try, there is always a vast wilderness between where they are and where they want to be.

... *Both are characterized by repeated rededication to try harder.* The biography of Israel in the wilderness shows a 40-year pattern of trying, failing, and rededicating themselves to try again. The people sincerely wanted to enter into Canaan, but all the sincerity they could muster never could bring them into the land. Their life story is marked by short-lived moments of victory, followed by a decline in faith that led to failure, then a renewed commitment to try again. Sound familiar?

Are you hungry for a more satisfying reality in your spiritual life? God loves you too much to leave you in a tawdry affair with religion. He wants you completely for Himself. You can file this away as an unalterable fact: God isn’t going to give up on you. There’s nothing you can ever do that will cause Him to shrug His

shoulders and walk away. Nothing. By divine determination, His invisible hand will relentlessly guide your steps until He brings you to the place where He can do for you everything He wants to accomplish.

God wants to bring you out of the barren wilderness of religious performance and into the fullness of a life in grace. His intention from the beginning has been that you should enjoy your faith relationship with Him. He wants you to live in Canaan – the land of amazing grace, where the most important thing is that you and He revel in the love that you share together.

... Having served as a local church pastor for many years and having been a Christian since I was a young child, I know both by observation and experience the agony of substituting religious activity for spiritual intimacy with Jesus Christ. It is possible to do all the right things outwardly and still miss the inner peace and joy that come only from our union with Him. God doesn’t want those He delivers from sin to get stuck in the wilderness of lifeless religious activity. He wants us to move into the enjoyment of His grace, knowing that when we experience our true life in Him, our activity will be animated by a divine power and accompanied by a personal satisfaction that can come only from Him.

... Multitudes of Christians have abandoned the intimate, loving relationship they once enjoyed with Jesus Christ and have settled for a sleazy affair with religion ...

... We have been seduced by religion and deceived into thinking that as long as we *do* the right things, everything is okay spiritually.

... Do you want to live enjoying God’s amazing grace? Then let’s possess the land.

Grace Amazing
Pages 13-23

God's Will: **His Grace Does It All**

by – Steve McVey

Grace means that God does it all. We simply receive from Him, cooperating with the Holy Spirit by trusting Him moment by moment. To walk in grace doesn't mean that we are passive in matters of daily living. To the contrary, it means that we act in confidence, resting in the fact that it is God who will initiate, perpetuate, and consummate His plan for our lives.

Many believers fall short of the joy God intends for them because they fail to understand how His grace acts on our behalf to bring to pass the wonderful plan He has for us. God has an awesome plan for your life. It isn't a cookie-cutter plan, either. He designed a special agenda that was uniquely created just for you. Before you were ever born, He saw you and customized His plan for your lifetime. One of the greatest joys in life is knowing that you are experiencing the very purpose for which you were created. Fulfilling the will of God is not some elusive goal that can never be reached. It is possible for Christians to enjoy the experience of *knowing* that we are in the very center of God's purpose.

... To a legalist the will of God is all about *doing*. He believes that it is his responsibility to find and fulfill God's specific plan for him. He is often sincere, yet his perspective actually cheats him out of the greatest benefit associated with God's will. The greatest blessing in experiencing God's will is the joy of experiencing God Himself! Yet the legalist is so focused on making the right choice that he usually misses the intimacy God intends for him to enjoy. This Christian believes that he has a job to do for God. Because of his drive to *do something*, he often makes a better "church member" than [a] Christian. He *can* often accomplish many good things. The only problem with the things he does is that God is nowhere to be found in his activity. ...

Many Christians live like deists. A deist basically believes that God created the world, fueled it up like a car, and then stepped back to watch it run its course. Deism recognizes very little personal interaction between God and His world. Its perspective implies that God has empowered the car (earth) to run, and now it is up to man where he drives it. ... [M]any Christians act like a deist when it comes to God's will. They look for God to show them His will so that they can then go out and do it.

... Where grace rules, man is the recipient of good things and God is the Giver. So under grace, it isn't the Christian's duty to *find* God's will, but rather God will *reveal* His will to the one who rests in Him. A person ruled by law will pursue God's will with sincerity and yet never be confident that he has discovered it. One who enjoys intimacy with Jesus will know it without struggling to find it.

Paul indicates that our first response to God in discovering His will is to yield ourselves to Him as a living and holy sacrifice [Romans 12:1]. Every Jew in Rome who read these words knew exactly what Paul was referring to when he used that phrase. ... God told Abraham to take his only son and offer him as a sacrifice on a mountain in Moriah [Genesis 22:1-14] ... Isaac yielded to his father's will, allowing himself to be bound and laid out for the sacrifice ...

... [Like Isaac,] we must totally surrender ourselves to God, yielding to His purpose, regardless of what it may be. Absolute abandon to God is the foundation in knowing His will. Presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice means that we take our hands off our own life and totally yield to Him. Absolute surrender brings an attitude of trust in Him with no conditions or strings attached. It is an affirmation that we will trust God and yield to Him, just as Isaac yielded to Abraham.

... Whenever a person holds on to personal rights, he sets himself up for the tyranny of fear when those rights are threatened. The only way to be free to experience God's will is to go through life with a loose grip on everything around us. He is the only security we have in life – and He is enough!

When we totally abandon ourselves to God, we bring ourselves to a place where we can experience the unfolding of His plan in ways that we never could have imagined. It is sometimes scary to release our grip on our own life in order to experience His life, but it is the only way to know and do His will!

... This aspect of surrender is generally misunderstood by a legalist. He believes it is his responsibility to make himself holy through disciplined devotion and religious regimen. When grace rules, however, a person understands that there is nothing he can do to make himself holy. Nor is there a need for such because the Christian has been granted holiness as a gift in the person of Christ. Unless a believer understands that he has been made holy through his union with Jesus Christ, he will never enjoy the will of God because of his focus on himself.

... Jesus has become our righteousness; therefore, the biblical instruction to present ourselves as a holy sacrifice simply involves acknowledging who we are in Him as we yield ourselves to the Father.

... If believers gave as much credit to the ability of the Holy Spirit to guide us into God's will as many give to Satan's ability to lead us out of God's will, freedom would reign in the church.

... The fact that you may have doubts doesn't mean that you aren't acting in faith. If there is no room for doubt in your decision, then there is no *need* for faith ... abide in faith, then act in boldness. The rest is up to God.

The God who saved you will also guide you! Don't worry about going astray. Simply choose to

depend entirely upon Him to guide your steps, and then move out in faith.

... Christians often make decisions with certain expectations about the results of their choice. When the results don't turn out the way they hoped, they may think that they have somehow gotten out of the will of God. This is a lie that will cause a person to become unproductive, in spite of the fact that he is exactly where God wants him. When a person believes he is out of God's will, he will lose all motivation to act in confidence and faith.

Maybe you have made choices only to later wonder what went wrong. You prayed about the choices. You evaluated them and then made your decision. Then things turned sour. Does this mean you missed God's will? No. Psalm 37:23 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD ..." God *did* direct your steps. Does it make sense that you could have sincerely *prayed* and earnestly *trusted* God to guide you only to have Him idly sit by and watch you make a mistake? ...

Imagine yourself standing in the center of a large field with an unobstructed view of the horizon in every direction. To the west you can see the ocean. To the east you can see a forest. Looking south, you see a beautiful lake shaded by overhanging trees. As you look, you see many small points on the horizon. Those points represent your choices in life. You can go to any one of them; many look interesting, others don't. Which points should you choose? If you are trusting Christ within you, the answer is easy. You can choose any place you desire. Of course, ... don't act independently of Him. Trust Him to guide your thoughts, then make *your* decision!

Have you selected the point on the horizon to which you want to go? Then run! Run there as fast as you can. Run with excitement and joyful anticipation. When you reach the spot you have selected, do you know what you will find? Jesus will be standing there. You'll see His arms outstretched toward you, and He will be laughing with joy. "Come on!" He will say. "Run! Run! I've

(continued on page 1146)

Universalism an Utterance of the Heart

by – Steve Jones
(A Former Pastor)

Introduce the topic of universalism and many Christians will point out instantly that it contradicts Holy Scripture. And when one peruses its pages, it may appear so. But one thing is undeniable by anyone whose heart goes out to others: We intuitively hope universalism is true.

Their kind-hearted and merciful wish is that God might finally bring all humanity into the circle of His grace. If they could, they would decree the redemption of every person on the planet. They would see the ultimate reform of each sinner, were the choice theirs.

And yet, the love, mercy and compassion of such souls falls far below God's. The span between heaven and earth is the span between our love and His. Man's mercy falters; God's mercy "*endures forever*" (I Chronicles 16:34). Man's love wears thin; God, on the other hand, *is* love (I John 4:8). Man's compassion extends just so far; God has compassion "*over all His works*" (Psalm 145:9).

That being the case, how can we assert that God will save fewer – much, much fewer, in fact – than the finite mercy of man would save? Does perfect love redeem a smaller company than would imperfect love?

Many at this point flee for refuge to the inscrutable ways of God. The Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, they remind us. He does not always act according to His creatures' logic. This is true, of course.

But the common rebuttal leaves us with a

baffling incongruity. Consider the tendency of humanity: The less godly a man, the narrower his mercy and love. The godlier a man, the broader, the more liberal his. Then consider God, the one whose character the godly emulate. Inexplicably, when love and mercy reach the zenith of perfection, the trend appears to reverse itself. The scope of redemptive mercy constricts. Most of his creatures cease being objects of mercy and become objects of wrath instead.

Isn't there something wrong with this theological picture? Flawed mercy would rescue all. Impeccable mercy will not. In light of such an enigma, we can't help but ask: Could it be that the larger portion of the Christian tradition has missed the mark on this subject?

Some will argue that although God wishes to restore all people, He will not violate our free will. How this free will becomes so invincible, so able to wear down omnipotence, remains to be explained. And why God's action against it would be a "violation" – as if He is subject to a higher law than Himself – is also unanswerable.

God is able to remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. He can work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). What human father would hesitate to "violate" the free will of a son who suddenly chooses to dash toward traffic? God is the parent of us all (Malachi 2:10).¹ We are His offspring (Acts

(continued on page 1147)

1. "*Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother? ...*" (Malachi 2:10).

The “Especially” Salvation

by – Martin Zender

God is the Savior of all men, especially of believers (I Timothy 4:10). He is not the Savior of all mankind, *exclusively* of believers. That would be the lie of the Christian religion. This verse alone proves that God will save all ...

The word “especially,” in I Timothy 4:10, is a very big word.

The “especially” there means that those who believe now do receive more. It is true that there are only a certain number of people chosen by God to believe in this life ...

The day I finally realized that salvation was not of me was a big day ... There really was no difference, I discovered, between my flesh, my mortality, my ability to seek God, and the flesh, mortality, and ability of unbelievers. I was in the same boat as everyone else. This is humbling, when you finally see it. It breaks you and you cry. Were it not for God’s grace, I would have been a Hitler, or a Manson, or a Dobson. It was Paul who said, “I am what I am by the grace of God.” People repeat that by rote; they don’t mean it. I used to repeat it and not mean it, too.

The revelation of grace was scary because I suddenly realized how thankful I should be. I used to not be overcome by great swells of thankfulness. Well, I thought I was a little bit worthy of eternal life. And I was, in my mind. After all, I believed. When I realized that God chose me to believe, and that He gave me the very faith needed to call out to Him (and the greater faith that ensued), I realized how helpless I’d been. I realized that if God hadn’t done all that, I’d still be an unbeliever. I became so thankful then, so desperately thankful. I became less condemning of those not yet chosen to believe. It was not their fault. I finally saw it. *My God, it was not their fault.* Conversely, it was no more my credit. God had to take me out of church

to restore to me a clear-thinking head.

Thanks to God, I did have something more. There as an advantage, I discovered, to being given belief now. I would live and reign with Christ during coming ages (Revelation 22:5), while those without faith would neither live nor reign then (Revelation 20:5). They would instead be dead while I reigned. This was the “especially” salvation of I Timothy 4:10. God Gives immortality to all, eventually (I Corinthians 15:22-28), but He gives it to some early so they can live and reign with Him through oncoming ages. These, He “especially” saves.

I learned that there were two glorious ages ahead: the thousand-year kingdom (Revelation 20:4) and the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21:1). I learned that most people would be dead during these glorious times (Revelation 20:5). When I learned that this wasn’t their fault, I felt sad for the people. But when I realized that they would eventually be given belief and live eternally with God, it mollified my grief. After all, what were two short eons compared with eternity? Nothing, relatively. Besides, as I said, the unbelievers would be dead. In the death state, there is no consciousness of time. This, also, was a surprising truth. I never knew it. It was always in Scripture, but I was trained to ignore it. These people would not *know* they were dead. It was God’s merciful provision. Jesus, in Scripture, compared death to sleep (John 11:11-13). It comforted me that these people would be asleep and unaware that I was living and ruling with Christ. No need for me to feel guilty, then.

When one realizes that all is of God and that nothing, absolutely, is of oneself, one does stop condemning unbelievers. It does make one ask God, however, “Why me and not them?” I did this. I wondered what it was. God simply said, “Because I chose you (Ephesians 1:4). Because

I favor you. I chose you before you were born (Romans 8:29)." I said, "But don't you favor them?" God said, "I am the Savior of all mankind, especially of believers. I'm the Savior of them as well, and they will live with me forever. But it is simply not My plan for them to live during the coming two ages. They'll have no complaints because they'll be with Me forever. This comes about in its own eras (I Timothy 2:5-6). For now, I'm working in a framework of time (Romans 16:16, the 'eonian God')."

"Enjoy what I've done for you. Stop worrying about everyone else. No one would have any complaints if I consigned the entire human race to the second death. Who would complain about being asleep for two relatively short ages – unaware of the time – and then waking up to a life of eternal bliss? The miracle, Martin, is not that everyone will live with Me for eternity: The miracle is that I have chosen before the eons a blessed few

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been waiting for you to get here! This is *exactly* where I wanted you to be!" "Lord!" you exclaim. "I'm so glad You're here! No matter what this place holds for me, I *know* the Father's purpose will be done because You drew me here and will be with me at every moment."

When grace rules your life, you'll experience the joy that comes from knowing and doing God's will. You don't have to be afraid; trust Jesus and go forward in faith. As you abide in Him, He will

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treated our dear parents through the years. They were there to help us put the pieces of our lives back together.

"Perhaps this, more than anything else, made it possible to have the courage to leave. They were our contact with reality throughout the unreal world of *Six Years with God*."

"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

who will rule and reign with Me during the coming two glorious ages of time (Revelation 22:5). This is the "*especially*" salvation of I Timothy 4:10. It delights Me to do this. It's not that the rest are cheated, it's that you and the others I have chosen are especially blessed. You come into My life early, and are privileged. It is nothing of yourself (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is everything of My favor. You are privileged above and beyond the rest of humanity. This is in accord with the delight of My will (Ephesians 1:5), not your worthiness or accomplishment (II Timothy 1:9). It delights Me to bring a select few in early. You are, as My Word says in Ephesians 1:12, 'Pre-expectant [first trusted] in the Christ.' So rejoice!"

The Really Bad Thing About Free Will: A Critical Look at the Salvation by Willpower Doctrine (2006)

Page 69-75

keep you in His will at every moment. He is God's will, and you are in Him.

... *Never* second-guess God's will after you have acted in faith ...

You can't go wrong with that kind of arrangement!

Grace Rules

Pages 120-139

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).

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13:4-7). ■

Loved and Accepted!

by – Bob George

If you are a true Christian, then you are as righteous and acceptable in the sight of God as Jesus Christ!”

What’s your reaction? If you are shocked? ... Then it may be that you just don’t know who you are in Christ. It may be that you know a great deal of doctrine, but your daily Christian life is still more a burden than a blessing. You may have tried and tried to change your life without success, in spite of all the seminars, books, and tapes you have searched. Whatever your situation, I have great news to share with you.

Most Christians, I find, understand the general idea behind forgiveness: God took our sins and gave them to Jesus. But that’s only half the message! God also took Christ’s perfect righteousness and gave it to us! II Corinthians 5:21 says,

*“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.**”*

How could I stand up and declare that in the sight of God I am as righteous and acceptable as Jesus Christ? Because of what I do? No way! It’s because of *who I am* in Christ.

The Bible goes to great lengths to declare that righteousness is a free gift that a man receives by faith.

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17:28).² Would He then not do everything in His power – a power that knows no bounds – to lead us away from ultimate destruction?

There is something intuitive about our desire to expand redemption beyond orthodox

2. “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).

*“For if by one man’s offence [Adam], 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).*

Righteousness (a right standing of total acceptability before God) is a *gift*. You don’t work for it. You don’t earn it. You don’t deserve it. Like any gift, all you can do is accept it or reject it. And once you have it, it’s yours.

Galatians 3:27 says,

*“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ **have put on Christ.**”*

Because we are *in Him* we are totally acceptable to God!

Now realize that I am talking about *ourselves* being acceptable to God, not necessarily our *actions*. In my identity I am eternally acceptable to Him, but that doesn’t mean that everything I do is all right. He may put His arm around me, so to speak, and show me the truth about something in my life that is out of line: an attitude, action, or habit. Why? So He can change my attitude that is out of line, resulting in a change of action. But at no time is His acceptance of *me* ever in question.

Classic Christianity
(1989)

boundaries. This is significant. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul expresses a belief that all humans have a law written on the heart. They have an inner monitor that informs them of such concepts as love, mercy, equity. Could it be that this principle is at war with the words of theologians and preachers? Might this explain the unrest of so many?



A Testimony of Loving Dedication

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

A couple who had spent 6 long years in the horrific cult of Jim Jones' *Peoples Temple* were able to leave before its deadly end, because of the loving dedication of their parents.

What kept so many others in the power of this fatal situation that ended with 912 people dead? It was the unimaginable bondage that this cult had upon them, keeping them prisoners to a system of incredible abuse. This of course was their inside bondage. Then too there was the outside bondage. Did not many think and dream of leaving? They had given up all to follow this sadistic leader. They now found themselves in a situation with no one or nowhere to turn. Their families and friends had long cut them off – abandoning them to their sad and final outcome.

Such was not the case for the Mills. Here is what Jeannie Mills wrote in the dedication of her book, *Six Years with God* (1979):

"It is lovingly dedicated to my mother, my father,

and my mother-in-law. Although they didn't agree with our belief in Jim Jones, and although all of our lives went through many drastic changes as my husband and I became more involved in Peoples Temple, the loyalty of our parents never wavered.

"Through the six long years, my parents lived next door to us and helped care for our ever changing family. Our friends were their friends, and they loved the scores of children that came into our home as real grandchildren. Although I occasionally scoffed at our parent's religious beliefs, their prayers and love were always with us.

"During this time, Al's mother always kept her doors open to us and to anyone we brought into her home and loved them simply because we loved them.

"When we left the Temple, there were no 'I told you so's,' no resentment of the way we had

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