



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue III

The Purpose of Trials

by – Arthur P. Adams

“I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (II Corinthians 7:4)

“I glory... in mine infirmities” (II Corinthians 12:5)

Paul said, “We glory in tribulation also.” How is it possible to have such an experience?

Every true Christian knows something of being resigned in tribulations. It is thought to be a great triumph of grace if, in the midst of troubles, distress and persecutions one is uncomplaining, submissive and patient.

But to “glory in tribulations,” “to take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses” (II Corinthians 12:10), to actually take pleasure in such things, this is an experience that very few know anything about; indeed to most it seems an impossible experience; it seems moreover utterly unreasonable to expect any such thing.

How can a person take pleasure in that which is unpleasant and painful? The thing is contrary to nature, and indeed seems contrary to common sense; and yet what shall we do with the numerous Scriptures that plainly set forth this experience, like those I have quoted above, and many others to the same effect?

Such an experience must be possible, for Paul and Peter and the other apostles and early Christians had it, and speak of it in the Bible as a thing within.

I apprehend that the reason why so few understand this experience is because they read the Word so carelessly, and understand so little about God’s way of life. “Made perfect through suffering” (Hebrews

2:10), and “through death to life” (Romans 4:25), is God’s way, and the one secret of “glorying in tribulations,” is to understand **the purpose of trials**.

Keeping One’s Eyes on the Result

He who has his eye on the result, when that result is grand and glorious beyond all expression or comparison, will reckon little of the means, especially if he realizes that they are the *only* possible means, and at the same time the absolutely *certain* means to reach the desired end.

Herein lies the whole secret of this wonderful experience; a worldly person might glory in the severest trials and sufferings if they were absolutely sure that they would thereby reach some lofty position of honor, power and wealth; he would not glory in the sufferings for their own sake, but for the sake of the final outcome.

So the Christian can “glory in tribulations,” and “take pleasure in distresses,” if he knows that thereby he is drawing nearer and nearer to the life of God; and this is just what the Scriptures teach; we will look at a few passages.

(continued on page 1191)

The Purpose of Trials	1189
No Confidence in the Flesh	1195
Selected Readings on Various Topics, Part VI	1197

(continued from page 1200)

Lastly, Christ loves His people with an INSTRUCTIONAL love. Christ washed His Church with the Word, as should husbands ... [The husband] is not told to pile on the information, he is told to wash his wife with the water of the word "**that He might sanctify and cleanse it**" (Ephesians 5:26).

Douglas Wilson
Federal Husband (1999)
Pages 22-25

FOR ME HE CAME

For me He came from heaven and in a stall was laid.

For me He was rejected. For me He was betrayed.

For me He was forsaken. For me His blood was shed.

For me His soul was cursed. For me He bowed His head.

For me His lifeless body was placed within the tomb.

For me the light of heaven dispelled the awful gloom.

For me the Son of Glory, fresh as the morning dew,

Was raised in mighty power. For me, for us, for you!

Cornelius Vanderbreggen, Jr.

A TRIFLE ODD

I am a trifle odd, perhaps, in my feeling about these things, but I believe that one cannot, so to speak, "go" to church. How can you go to something that you are already a part of? If you are a Christian, you are the church.

Charles Schulz (Creator of "Peanuts" comic strip)
Cited in Robert L. Short's *The Gospel According to Peanuts* (1964)
Page 48

Bible Student's Notebook

ISSN: 1936-9360
No. 111 – November 22, 2007

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."

SUBSCRIPTION

U.S.: 6 months (12 issues) - \$24⁰⁰; 1 year (24 issues) - \$42⁰⁰; 2 years (48 issues) - \$72⁰⁰; 3 years (72 issues) - \$90⁰⁰;
Foreign: 1 year (24 issues) - \$60⁰⁰;

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.

The Bible Student's Notebook

bsn@studyshelf.com
www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

PO Box 265
Windber, PA 15963
Office: (800) 784-6010

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor
Andre Sneidar – Managing Editor

Visit our online bookstore at: www.StudyShelf.com

Copyright © 1989-2007 Pilkington & Sons

Paul says,

*"We glory in tribulations, **knowing** that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Romans 5:3-5).*

The whole point in this passage depends on seeing the force of the word "knowing." We glory in tribulations, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience," etc.

Do you know this? Do you know that our troubles and sorrows and distresses refine and sanctify us, and make us "*meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?*" (Colossians 1:12).

Do you know that this is the *only* way whereby we may be made thus meet? Do you desire a seat with Christ on His throne? A share in His reign?

Our trials are the means whereby we are fitted for the place God has for us in His kingdom. They give us the necessary training for our office in that kingdom; hence they are the price we have to pay for a government position under the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the knowledge of this fact, viz. that every trial properly borne brings us nearer perfection and the reward, that enables the believer not only to bear them with patience and resignation, but even to rejoice in them, since we know that though

"For the present they are not joyous but grievous, yet afterward they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

Our God is a reasonable Being. He says, "*Come now let us reason together*" (Isaiah 1:18). He deals with us on common sense principles. God's ways, when rightly understood, will commend themselves to our own judgment; His requirements and precepts are just what we should choose ourselves had we the same knowledge; hence when we come to understand His ways, we readily conform to them because we see that they are best, that this is our "*reasonable service*" (Romans 12:1).

Now then, in regard to trials, if we can only see and understand that they are needful for our training to fit us for a glorious and blessed future, then although we could not rejoice in the trial for its own sake, we could rejoice in it, yea, we could take pleasure in it, for the sake of the benefit we were to derive therefrom in the end.

Men of the world act upon this principle. The Athlete submits to the most rigid training and to great self denial for months together, in order that he may gain the prize in the walking, rowing, or sparring match, or in some other contest of muscle and brawn. "*Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible*" (I Corinthians 9:19-27).

If God has opened your eyes to see something of the glories of the coming kingdom, if the veil of sense has been removed that you have caught a glimpse of the things beyond, "*the unseen things*," (II Corinthians 4:18) you will understand that the path to those glories lies through trial, suffering and affliction that you may reap the reward by and by.

The apostle says,

"Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding, and eternal, weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17).

Most people stop here and so lose all the point of the passage; they say, "my afflictions are not light and momentary; they are heavy and continuous, far beyond that of other people, and I cannot see how they are of any benefit to me, nor how I can rejoice in them." Read the next verse and you will understand how to obtain the experience set forth.

"Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, WHILE WE look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:17-18).

What Are You Looking At?

Afflicted brother or sister, what are you looking at?

Are you looking at yourself and your trials? Are you looking with envious eyes at your neighbors and friends whom you think have an easier time than you? Are you looking with longing eyes at the pleasures and enjoyments, the apparent peace and comfort of others? Wishing that you might possess the same, and comparing your hard circumstances with their apparently pleasant ones?

While you look at such things as these you will not find your afflictions light and momentary, neither will they work out for you the wonderful glory that Paul speaks of; it is only WHILE you look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, not seen by the natural eye but apprehended by the eye of faith, (Hebrews 11:13-16) that your afflictions become easily bearable and work out for you the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; your afflictions become light and momentary by comparison with the exceeding glory of the unseen and eternal things; as the apostle says again,

"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).

Not Worthy

Our present sufferings are oft times great in themselves, and sometimes they seem overwhelming while we are looking at them, or compare them with the apparently pleasant circumstances of others, but they *"are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

So Paul thought when he counted

"all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; ... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:8, 10-11).

The ancient worthies were actuated by the same intense desire, *"not accepting deliverance"* from their cruel persecutions, *"that they might obtain a better resurrection"* (Hebrews 11:35).

Moses *"chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"* (Hebrews 11:25).

Jesus Christ Himself *"endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him"* (Hebrew 12:2). So, also Jesus taught, listen! *"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you."*

What! Blessed are ye when men shall hate you! (Luke 6:22-23). Is that the way its reads? Yes, that's the way its reads; but hear the rest.

"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did they unto the prophets."

Well, well, that's a strange *"blessed."* Blessed when we are hated; we are to rejoice and leap for joy when we are reproached, and slandered, and cast out; that's too much for *human nature*.

Yes, it is too much for *human nature*, but it is not too much for the *divine nature*, of which we are made *"partakers,"* by the *"exceeding great and precious promises"* (I Peter 4:4).

These promises are God's notes of hand, and are good for their full face value, and more, yea, *"much more"* (Romans 5:17), because the Great Promisor is *"able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20). But let two things be remembered in regard to the above quoted words of Jesus, *"and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for the Son of man's sake"* (Matthew 5:11).

If you are spoken against falsely, and for Christ's sake, then this *"Blessed"* is yours, and you may rejoice in it. But,

"What glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if

when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:20-21).

We sometimes hear persons say when they are suffering from the ill will or unkindness of others, "If I had done anything to merit such treatment I would not say anything; but to be accused falsely, and be ill treated when you are not to blame, is more than I can bear." It is not more than Christ bore, and He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (I Peter 2:22) and "if any man hath not the spirit of Christ He is none of His" (Romans 8:9).

Our Calling

Sufferings, afflictions, trials, etc., are a part of the believer's "calling" in this age.

Whatever calling, profession or occupation a man may choose, he would, of course, expect to pass through a certain process of study, discipline and training to fit him for that calling, and that preparatory process is a necessary part of the calling.

So it is in "the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

The process, by which we are prepared for the high position, is of course, a part of the calling.

Therefore,

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, [rather take it as a matter of course, an expected part of your training] and rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy; if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (I Peter 4:12-14).

"If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him" (II Timothy 2:12).

And thus are we,

"Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

You desire to be glorified with Him by and by, but are you unwilling to walk with Him now in the suffering, humiliation and reproach, and thereby "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Colossians 1:24)?

It is only as we know now something of "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10) that we shall know by and by, "the power of His resurrection." And what a wonderful privilege it is thus to be permitted to share with Christ in His sufferings and His glory!

"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1: 29).

And if we "see our calling" (I Corinthians 1:26), we shall "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ" (Acts 5: 41).

Therefore,

"My Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials], KNOWING THIS, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

All Joy

Here again the whole force of the passage depends on the word "knowing." If you know the truth set forth in the latter part of the passage you will have no difficulty about the experience of the first part. You can count your trials "all joy," if you only know that thereby you are being continually advanced toward that condition where you will be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

If you do not know this great truth, the idea of counting trials "all joy" will seem impossible and even

foolish to you; in other words if we understand the purpose of trials, we shall not only be resigned to them, but we can glory in them, yea “*take pleasure*” in them, “*in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, for Christ’s sake, that the power of Christ may rest upon us*” (II Corinthians 12:9).

The hardest trials we have to bear are injustice, misrepresentation, slander, false accusation, but this is just what we need to perfect our patience, and fit us for a place in the coming kingdom. The Lord’s jewels need cutting, grinding and polishing, before they shall be fit to be set in His “*crown of rejoicing*” (I Thessalonians. 2:19).

The severer the process the more brilliant will be the finished gem, and the more perfectly will it be able to flash forth the reflection of the glories of the great Artificer. Hence the believer, fortified with this knowledge of the purpose of evil, can “smile at the storm,” knowing that—let it blow ever so hard and so angry, the gale can only “drive them nearer home.”

Perhaps someone is ready to ask at this point “Is not the believer ever to be sad and sorrowful? Should he always be full of joy and mirth no matter what comes?” Surely the child of God is sad and sorrowful oftentimes. Frequently, there is but very little mirth in his heart, and yet he may rejoice even while he weeps. Did you never read Paul’s Paradoxes?

“In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God … by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things” (II Corinthians 6: 4-10).

Oh wonderful and blessed experience of life in death, joy in sorrow, riches in poverty, “*all things*” in “*nothing!*” Foolishness to the natural man, but luminous with glory to him that is spiritual! But alas, how few there are who know anything about this experience. Some “*love this present world*” (II Timothy 4:10) so well that they do not know

enough even to be resigned in trials, much less to glory in them.

The Audacity of Faith

“*When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8). There is plenty of the spurious article, but where is the genuine? Oh that you and I, friend reader, may be among the few who shall possess that clearness of spiritual insight, and audacity of faith, that shall enable us to “*glory in tribulation*,” to “*take pleasure in infirmities*,” and to “*rejoice and leap for joy*” even on account of those things that the world would reckon among the worst calamities.

“*What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*” (Job 2:10). He is equally the Creator of both, and both shall equally “*work together for good to them that love God*” (Romans 8:28). Therefore, “*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,*” (Isaiah. 54:11) triumph over your trials and afflictions by this knowledge of their purpose, for the Lord hath said, “*No I will never leave thee; no, no, I will not forsake thee*”(Hebrews 13:5).

In a fashionable gathering a young man who affected infidelity heard that a lady of note, then present, professed to believe the Bible. Finding her out in the company, he made bold to ask if it were true that she believed the Bible. “Yes, sir, I do most certainly,” replied the lady decidedly. “Why do you believe it?” still further queried the skeptic. “Because I am acquainted with the Author,” was the quick reply, that effectually put a stop to all further questioning.

“Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME, that I am the Lord who exerciseth loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9: 23-24.)



No Confidence in the Flesh

by – Douglas W. Frank

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

“The Flesh”

Our tendency has been to identify “*the flesh*” with the physical body in a fairly simplistic way, to assume that Paul was talking primarily about sexual sins. Paul’s use of the term, however, was much more profound and far reaching. In his letters Paul speaks of the flesh as that deep-rooted, natural orientation in the human being that is unrelentingly hostile toward God. The flesh is driven by a spirit of fear to seek its own enhancement and glorification instead of the glorification of God. In this frantic self-enhancement, it is enslaved and serves the law of sin ... “*The flesh*” is a reference to the enslavement of humanity by its own passions, that is, humanity at its most fallen and futile and tragic (Romans 8:7, 15; 7:25; Galatians 6:8; Romans 8:13).

The Passion for Religion

Now it is clear that among these passions, rooted in the very core of human existence, is the passion for religion and the self-enhancement that religion offers. Paul hints at this in Romans 7:18, where he confesses that, although nothing good dwells in his flesh, he finds that he is indeed capable of *willing* what is right; it is the *doing* of the right that he ultimately finds impossible. In fact, several important passages in Paul’s letters indicate that it is precisely this sincere willing of the good and right – and the religious machinations and presumptions issuing from it – that most manifest the enslavement of the flesh.

Rituals of Jewish Law

Paul’s letter to the Galatian church, for example, is full of consternation that they have been “bewitched,” so that, “*having begun with the Spirit*,” they were “*now made perfect by the*

flesh.” What was their offense? It seems to have been a revival of the rituals of the Jewish law as a test and a badge of their faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The motivations of these religious enthusiasts, and what characterized their “fleshiness,” seems to have been to do with making a “fair show.” In the attempt to demonstrate their own goodness, however, they were preaching “*another gospel*” – indeed, a perversion of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:3; 6:12; 1:6-7).

Ethical Legalism

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul reproached the church for a different variety of enslavement to “*the flesh*.” Here those who desired to appear morally upright were encouraging a severe ethical legalism, along with pious-sounding religious accoutrements such as the worship of angels and the attending to visions. Paul startled the Colossians by referring to them as the issue of a “puffed up” and “sensuous” mind. Since the Colossians had experienced the “*putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ*,” they were encouraged to avoid the kind of moral strictures (“*touch not, taste not, handle not*”) that indicate, surprisingly, not piety but enslavement to the world. He left no doubt that he associated the religious mentality and moral legalism with the flesh when he wrote, “*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*” On the contrary, he might have said, the very attempt at self-abasement in these ways is of the essence of self-enhancement, and thus, far from checking the indulgence of the flesh, it subtly serves to promote it (Colossians 2:18-23)!

Religious Achievement and Moral Heroism

It appears, then, that Paul associated the flesh

with the pride of religious achievement and of moral heroism, as if somehow those human attributes and behaviors that to all appearances are most “spiritual” one can discern the deep-rooted rebellion against God that is actually most unscriptural. In his instruction to the Colossians, Paul explicitly warns that the legalistic moralism to which they were drawn was a sign that, although Christ had liberated them from the “rudiments of the world,” these Christians gave evidence that they still belonged to the world (Colossians 2:20.) Here Paul shows a profound understanding of the deepest human motivations. He refused to be taken in by the appearance of goodness and piety. The burden of the religious person is to demonstrate that in religiosity he or she stands apart from and is obviously superior to all others, particularly to those who do not appear devout or moral. Paul’s use of “flesh” reveals his understanding of the essential sameness of all human beings, both the religious and the ostensibly non-religious. A concern for religiosity as such indicated to him simply the continuation of the human project of self-glorification and self-apotheosis – but in another guise, one that is somewhat more difficult to penetrate. The religious person, or the moral hero, is devoted to his or her own symbolic divinity, not to the divinity of Jesus Christ ...

Lest his Christian brothers and sisters miss the point, Paul took time to spell out the implication for his own life as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He had himself been a Pharisee, and he knew intimately and no doubt embarrassingly the seductiveness of religious and moral attainment. It was a measure of the divinely wrought revolution in his own being that he could count himself among those who “worship God in Spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.” Paul had obviously put his entire confidence in the flesh even when, as a devout Pharisee, he had thought that he was putting confidence in God alone. He had been proud and supremely confident in his religious attainment, and he owned that he could be confident still, had it not been for a meeting with Jesus Christ.

As he wrote to the Philippians,

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 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” (Philippians 3:4-8).

Surely here Paul intended his readers to see this subtlest of points – that it was not as infidel or libertine that he had breathed “out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” but as the model of piety and purity, as the epitome of the religious man. His very violence was a function of his “goodness.” ...

What Paul had learned ... is that the religious person who takes pride in avoiding “worldliness” is the very essence of enslavement to the flesh. As he wrote to the church at Rome, this person “cannot please God.” As one who had worked unceasingly to please God, and who believed that he had done so quite nicely, Paul understood the gospel of Jesus Christ as a judgment of God upon the religious person. He understood that religious and moral heroes measure themselves “by themselves” and thus show that they are “without understanding.” “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” he wrote.

Less Than Conquerors
(Eerdmans 1986)
Pages 233-236

Selected Readings

On Various Topics

Part VI

GOD'S UMBRELLA OF PROTECTION

The Bible does not require the submission of women to men, but rather of a woman to a man.

The submission of a woman to a man, far from making her submissive to other men, *protects* her from obligations to other men. This provides her with an umbrella of protection (that is, her husband) from other men. She is to be submissive to her own husband, and the Bible teaches clearly that no one can serve two masters.

Douglas J. Wilson
Reforming Marriage (1995)
Pages 36-37

MOTIVES

Humans are very seldom either totally sincere or totally hypocritical. Their moods change, their motives are mixed, and they are often themselves quite mistaken as to what their motives are.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)
Letters to an American Lady

PERSONALITY

A man does not lose his personality when he comes to Christ, he finds it. "Ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). Without Christ, life is unfinished, unfurnished, unrealized.

Upper Room Tract
No. UR16

GOOD CAUSES

There are many "good" causes being championed in the world today that frequently serve as

distractions for the Christian, because they draw our attention away from our true calling. In most cases there is no question that the issues are just and right, but they only deal with the symptoms – they leave the disease untouched ... For centuries the church has been offering the world band-aids for a deep, mortal wound.

Rick Joyner
There Were Two Trees in the Garden
(1986)

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Religious people cannot tolerate the breaking of their regulations. Any violation of their religious regulations will stir up persecution. When Jesus broke the Sabbath, the Jewish religionists persecuted Him and even sought to kill Him. Eventually, religion succeeded in sentencing Jesus to death. In the book of Acts we see that the situation was the same regarding the persecution of the apostles. In like manner, a great many martyrs have suffered persecution at the hand of religion. Now it is our turn to undergo this persecution, this suffering for the building up of the Body of Christ.

Witness Lee (1905-1997)
Life-Study of Colossians
Page 100

WE ARE FOOLISH AND WEAK

Those who have vision [of seeing God's true church as it really is] should spend their energies in being faithful to what the Lord has shown them -- not in throwing stones at their brothers and sisters who have not yet seen what they have seen. I believe it would be better not to have a vision of the church at all, than to have this understanding but also

be consumed by pride. We may think that we are better or more worthy than others – that we have some special abilities ... but God has chosen the foolish and weak to shame the wise and the strong “*that no flesh should glory in His presence*” (I Corinthians 1:29).

The fact that God has shown you something is no argument at all that you are a superior human being. Quite the contrary, it may be proof that you are weak and foolish ... Let us resolve not to be critical of our brothers and sisters, but rather in gentleness and humility to live in such a way that God may use us to increase His vision in others.

John Saunders
The House of God

HE IS TRUSTWORTHY

Trust your Heavenly Father. In every situation, He is trustworthy. Even when you don't understand, trust Him. As you grow in your knowledge of your *Abba*, you will learn to accept events as they unfold. He is the loving Sovereign over the details of your life and will perform on your behalf, and for His own glory, all the things He has planned for you. Even through your impatience with circumstances, He will bring you into a greater maturity.

He will accomplish His goals for your life. Your only responsibility is to trust in His goodness and His wisdom. The destination which you will reach is not your concern. Your role is to cling to Him as the journey unfolds. His role is to ensure that you reach His intended destination. Christians bring trouble upon ourselves when we confuse the two roles.

Relax, and enjoy your journey. Rest in His Sovereignty. Your life is an adventure, planned and performed by a supernatural God who adores you.

Steve McVey
Grace Walk

THE EXPLOITATION BY “FAMILY MINISTRIES”

There are many able ministries available today which set out to restore Christian family life. It has become a growth industry for professional meddling, both in and out of ‘the church.’ It seems the more they try to help, the worse it becomes. At first, I thought I was imagining this oddity. But after working in the pastoral ministry – inside the veil, so to speak – I came to realize that the clergy exploit unhappy spouses to justify their idleness. It is filled with phone calls, gossip, public appearances, and delusions of grandeur.

James Wesley Stivers
Restoring the Foundations: Essays in Relational Theology (1995)
Page 3

SPIRITUALITY

The persistent course of man has been to bring things down to earth, to make something of temporal power, reputation, glory, appearance. One result of this has been so to associate Christian life with outward customs, forms, places and activities as entirely to confuse spirituality with these things.

T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)
A Witness and a Testimony
(November 1940)

THE NEED FOR ADJUSTABILITY

Adjustability on our part is a very important thing with God. Are we adjustable? The whole question is of what God is able to do with us – of determining what God is able to use – of His having a free way to reach His end by our being adjustable.

Many of the Lord's people stop short at adjusting to the truth. It very often means breaking with something that we have regarded as very important and very precious. We have come to see that, after all, that was only our conception of it. In God's view that does not occupy the place

at all that we had thought it occupied, and it has to be left behind. We have to adjust to something higher and fuller than that, to a more spiritual and heavenly conception of things.

T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)
A Witness and a Testimony
(May 1939)

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Son of God lived the Christian life:

- by an indwelling Father
- by the Father imparting His life to His Son
- by the Son living by means of the Father's life
- by the Son listening to His Father
- by the Son responding to what He heard the Father say
- by the Father revealing Himself to His Son
- by the Son beholding His Father
- by the Father loving the Son
- by the Son loving the Father back with the very love which the Father poured out on the Son.

And, finally:

Take all of those elements together and you have the one secret ... of the *how* of the Christian life. What you see in all of this is the Son fellowshipping with the Father.

Gene Edwards
Overlooked Christianity
(1997)

Too HIGH A PRICE

While it is true that many sincere and true believers in Jesus Christ are found in the "churches," there is no need for me to follow them there in order to have their friendship and enjoy their fellowship. To submit or to defer to an organization where, as a rule, matters of great spiritual importance are settled by a majority vote is too high a price for me to pay for the friendship or fellowship of any man. The true believer in Jesus Christ will never deny

friendship or fellowship to another believer just because he does not cast his lot with a "church" organization. The sectarian minded will do this, but the fellowship of such is hardly worth having if some surrender of principle must be made to gain it.

Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)
Christian Individualism:
A Way of Life for the Active Believer in Jesus Christ (1961)

THE GREATEST DELIGHTS SHOWERED

Even in everyday life we meet with worthy people who seem to think that whatever is pleasant must be wrong ... that the bright, sunny, radiant nature which surrounds us is an evil and not a blessing – a temptation devised by the spirit of evil and not one of the greatest delights showered on us in such profusion by the Author of all Good.

Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913)
The Use of Life (1894)

COMMITMENT

It is HE who has committed Himself to us.

Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)
God Only

THE SUBMISSION OF WIVES AND DAUGHTERS

The masculinist problem is that of seeing women generally having to submit to men generally. In contrast, the biblical pattern is that particular women are to be in submission to particular fathers and husbands. This prevents their submission to other men, which, considering some of the men out there, is a good thing. This means a particular noble woman could in many respects be the superior of a particular man ...

My objection is that the masculinist position is just as unbiblical as the feminist position. Men who are not leaders in the home, where Scripture requires it, are commonly tempted to make up for this

abdication elsewhere. This is sometimes found in the comfort of knowing that “men” have it over “women.” But this is no-cost authority.

Douglas Wilson
Federal Husband (1999)
Pages 64-67

THE HUSBAND'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WIFE

One of the most difficult things for modern men to understand is how they are responsible for their wives. Men come into a ... counseling session with the assumption that “She has her problems, and I have mine,” and the counselor is here to help us split the difference. But the husband is responsible for all the problems. This is the case for no other reason than that he is the husband.

This does not mean the wife has no personal responsibilities as an individual before God. She certainly does, just as her husband has individual responsibilities. They are both private persons who stand before God. But he remains the head, just as Christ as the Head assumed all the responsibility for all the sins of all His people, so the husband is to assume covenant responsibility for the state of his marriage. If a husband says he objects to this because it is not fair to him to be held responsible for the failings of another, he is really saying he objects to the gospel. It was not “fair” for Christ to assume responsibility for our sins either. But while

it may not have been fair as we define it, it was nevertheless just and merciful.

Douglas Wilson
Federal Husband (1999)
Page 12

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AS CHRIST

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

Christ loved [the church] with an **EFFECTIOUS** love; He loved the Church in a way which transformed ...

Christ loved His people with a **RESPONSIBLE** love. In His loving, He took upon Himself all the sins of His people. These were sins which He had not personally committed and for which we had no right to blame Him. And yet ... He assumed responsibility. The ground of our salvation is nothing less than Christ’s assumption of that responsibility.

In the same way, a husband may not be blamed for a particular problem in his marriage. But whether he is at fault or not, he remains responsible. Christ was never to blame for anything that God held Him responsible for, and yet He assumed the responsibility for all our sins ...

(continued on page 1190)

