



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume VII
Issue 157

The Great Adventure of Faith

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

*A*ll of life is an adventure, and so much more so for the believer. The life of God in us produces a lifetime of adventure – what I like to call *the great adventure of faith*. How can it not be so, for we are talking here about the very life of God at work **"in us!"** – *"according to the power that works in us."*

Simply amazing; God at work in our seemingly monotonous and meaningless existences – even more so, in our failures, in our weaknesses, in our inadequacies, in our insufficiencies. It is here in the midst of all this that God has chosen to live out His life *"in us"* – *His Divine life within what appears to be the confines of mere human existence.*

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (II Corinthians 3:4-5).

The sufficiency of God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary; *not always* by the change of the circumstances – but *always* by the presence of His life **"in us."** Every day can be lived in expectancy – expectancy from God, the *"power that works in us."*

Truly we have the privilege of awaking every morning to the *adventure of life*; not just any life, but the

adventure of Divine life. Now there is expectancy!

Expectancy is the very definition of *"hope."* When we read the word *"hope"* in our English translations of the Scriptures, we do not have the idea of *"hope-so."* Instead we have the truth of *confident expectation of Divine accomplishment.*

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

What a thrill to be a part of the Divine ministry of our Father! To be privileged to anticipate with great excitement the future that He has in store for us, both in this present age, and in the ages to come!

"That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

We are truly on *the great adventure of faith!*



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The Latest Word ...

A Look at the Latest Additions to Our Inventory

The Gospel of Our Salvation

(#3905) by Adlai Loudy (1893-1984) 122 pages, HB, \$12.⁹⁵

This book explores the various gospels of the Scripture, with a special emphasis given to the message of God's grace for believers today. This work embraces the *salvation of all mankind*.

The Problem of Evil and the Judgments of God

(#3850) by A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) 346 pages, PB \$15.⁹⁵

This book traces the divine function of evil, from its inception to its consummation, by presenting scriptural solutions to the various long-debated questions concerning God and His sovereignty. As one of its subjects, it probes and takes issue with the commonly accepted explanation that Satan, and not God, is responsible for evil.

"Almost all of us are shortsighted. We see the judgments, but fail to recognize that they are only part of God's way with mankind, that they are definitely not an end. We confuse the going with the goal. Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it as a preparation toward a glorious consummation."

The message in this book is especially valuable to us in these days of doubt and distress, to lead men to rely on and rest in God alone.

Spirit, Spirits and Spirituality

(#3175) by A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) 157 pages, PB, \$11.95

Most of the material centers on Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, with such topics as our spiritual blessings among the celestials, the sealing and earnest of the spirit, and the unity of the spirit. Spiritual warfare is discussed, as well as matters concerning the human spirit and the Holy Spirit of God.

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

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

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

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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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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Freedom

Select Readings on *True Liberty*

(Part 2)

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36).

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:17).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

LAWS OF RELIGION

Laws of religion are intended to hedge us in and distinguish between those who belong and those who don't ... These rules include a vast array of expectations about how one should pray, vote, serve, dance (or not), drink, eat, spend time on Sunday, spend money, educate children, and worship. The laws of one's doctrine may even give particulars about how to spend "quiet time" with God each day. These expectations become "law" when we feel we must live up to them in order to feel adequate or acceptable to our communities, our church, other Christians, ourselves, and maybe even God ...

Religion uses laws in an attempt to make us all look the same. But the grace of God enables us to live daring, free lives outside of man-made lines as unique individuals. Remember the troubles the Pharisees had with Jesus? He was never where they anticipated Him to be; they would look for Him in the temple and He would be eating and hanging out "on the wrong side of the tracks." When He was supposed to be fasting, He was eating with tax collectors and prostitutes. He healed on the Sabbath when He was expected to rest. And all the while He was only doing what He had heard His Father say and seen His Father do (John 5:19, 26, 30; 14:10). Likewise, when we live in a grace relationship with God, we will be in line with His will, even though we can count on being out of line with the will of some religious

leaders. For those exhausted by a heavy yoke of Christian traditions and self-standards, this is truly good news!

Bill Ewing

Rest Assured (2003), pp. 110, 192

NEW FORM OF TRADITION

There are also religious institutes, schools and seminaries promoting particular theologies, and many allow for no critical thinking whatsoever. Basically, students are spoon fed a theology and expected to regurgitate it perfectly when they become professional clergy to their group. It's the new form of tradition and it always ends up stagnating and stunting spiritual growth. Under the auspices of professional clergy, doctrine can then be spoon fed to the laity and then they are held accountable for remaining loyal to that doctrine often at the cost of abandoning loyalty to family and friends. The authority of denominations and sects frustrates further needed reform and conformity to the Word of God. This loss of liberty is a major problem with only one solution: abandon the self-appointed authorities, do not submit to them and their theological boxes. Not only can one then show proper loyalty to family and friends, they can fully express love towards them without restriction and they will also be able to more fully conform to God's Word. Christ alone is our head, and when some other is allowed to impose religious authority over you (no matter ►

how well-intentioned), you have allowed them to usurp Christ's authority and they can only degrade your relationship with Christ.

Ross Purdy
I Will Have One Doctrine and One Discipline
Bible Student's Press (2008)

UNLOVING AND JUDGMENTAL

If Christians are supposed to have a monopoly on the riches of God, why do our lives look so similar to those who don't believe?

Instead of being the most free, we remain all bound up. Rather than being the ... least confined by the opinions of others, the most free to love unconditionally, we Christians have become stiff, unbending, unloving and judgmental.

Bill Ewing
Rest Assured (2003), pp. 20, 21

SHUNNING THE THEATRE?

Christians must not altogether shun plays because there are sometimes coarseness and adulteries therein; for such reasons they would have to give up the Bible too!

Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Cited by Ralph Woodrow in
In the World, Not of the World, p. 27

LET NO MAN BEGUIL (DEFRAUD) YOU

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18).

[Beguile] may also be rendered "judge you unworthy." It means to judge or criticize in such a way as to deceive. The heretical teachers judged that the saints were not worthy to worship God directly and told them that they had to worship God through the mediation of angels. This was to defraud the saints of their prize, which is Christ.

In Christ, our sole Mediator, we can worship God directly ...

Certain Gnostic teachers said that man was too low to worship God directly. They advocated a type of self-abasing humility, some form of self-deprecation which was supposed to show that a person was humble. They taught that those who have such humility will not presume to worship God directly. To be so bold as to worship God without mediation, these Gnostics taught, was a mark of pride. They reminded the believers that they were sinful, fallen beings with fleshly lusts and evil thoughts. They went on to say that those who are humble will not attempt to worship directly the holy and pure God. Through such a show of humility, they seduced the Colossian believers and led them astray to the worship of angels. By this means, they deprived the Colossian saints of their enjoyment of Christ. Instead of enjoying Christ directly as their Mediator, the believers turned to angels. As a result, they were defrauded of their prize [reward].

Witness Lee (1905-1997)
Life-study of Colossians, pp. 206, 208

THE MAN-MADE LEASH OF AUTHORITY

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

The authority of denominations and sects in the form of tradition frustrates further needed reform and conformity to the Word of God. The authority of man-made institutions is a stubborn thing which resists change ...

We, as the saints of God, find ourselves fenced off institutionally from one another based on various interpretations of men ... The frustration is compounded by the mislabeling of man's tradition as "the pure doctrine of God." ...

The disciples were instructed by Christ to conform to God rather than to man's authority. Yet even in Christ's day the authorities resisted Christ Himself and demanded that He conform to their religion. ...

When doctrine is carved in stone as is a confession or doctrinal statement, we merely promote another man-made tradition, no matter how close it is to the truth; because if it is possible to get closer to the truth, we find out that we are tethered to someone else's understanding by a leash of authority and can proceed no closer. If we dare to break the tether, we threaten all our relationships that are still tied to it and face the trauma of breaking the communion of saints built over a lifetime. Thus one might more readily be inclined as well to stick with mind-numbing tradition rather than suffer the consequences. ...

We ought not to set up false and invalid authority structures to force conformity to some uniform human religious standard. We can't force what we believe on someone else. They must accept it and own it for themselves. Legislation of doctrine will not result in ownership. They are God's servant like we all are, and we all answer to God and not to ordinary men no matter what titles or gifts they claim. Christ alone is our authority to Whom we shall answer and He is our standard. Christ ought to be our exclusive polity.

You are only fooling yourself in thinking that there must be some kind of human intermediary authority! If we think we can become something more, it can only be ministers, *i.e.*, servants, and not rulers.

Ross Purdy

I Will Have One Doctrine and One Discipline
Bible Student's Press (2008)

A COFFIN FOR THE LAW

God had barely given the Law to Moses when He ordered that it be put in a coffin. That's right – a coffin. The reason for this is that the Mosaic covenant clearly stipulated:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5).

Israel, of course, did not obey God's voice indeed, but broke the Law before Moses even got down from Sinai. It was because of this that God, in grace, commanded:

"And they shall make an ark ..." (Exodus 25:10).

This word "ark" is rendered "coffin" in the last verse of Genesis and that is its simple meaning. But why did God order a coffin as the very first article of furniture for the tabernacle? The answer is: To put the Law in. Read it for yourself:

"And thou shalt put into the coffin the testimony [the Law] which I shall give thee ... and thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the coffin ..." (:16, 21).

If God had not put the covenant of the Law in a coffin and met His people from a "mercy seat" none of them ever would have been saved ...

Cornelius R. Stam (1909-2003)
Two Minutes with the Bible

THOU SHALT NOT HAVE A GOOD TIME

Many people look on Christianity as a very negative affair, consisting of a lot of "Thou shalt nots," and certainly including "Thou shalt not have a good time!"

This is partly the fault of some religious people, and partly because very few men and women trouble [themselves] to find out what Jesus Himself actually said – and was.

Consider these facts about Him:

(1) So far from wanting people's lives to be anemic and negative, Jesus said that He had come to bring them more life than they had ever known before.

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

(2) So far from being a kill-joy and puritan, Jesus enjoyed the good things of life, and even created in the minds of some religious people, a reputation for being too fond of good food and the bottle.

“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!”
(Luke 7:34).

(3) So far from adopting a “holier-than-thou” attitude, Jesus loved all kinds of people, and thus got a name for keeping bad company.

“The Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2).

J.B. Phillips (1906-1982)
For This Day (1975), p. 16

DELIVERANCE FROM “CHRISTIAN” LAW

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

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:6).

You can have Christian law as much as you can have Mosaic law. You can be in bondage in Christianity just as much as in Judaism. Christianity can be an imposed system with “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not,” just as much as the Mosaic law; and there are just as many Christians today who are afraid of Christianity, so to speak, as there were Jews who were conscious of the dead weight of the law imposed upon them.

How many there are in bondage to Christian law, whose consciences are an awful bugbear to them in Christianity. It is very blessed to sing, “Free from the law, O happy condition,” when you are

thinking back into Judaism, but it is infinitely better to be free to sing it in relation to Christianity.

Is Christianity to us in any degree a matter of what we must do and what we must not do? And if we do not do what we should do, or if we do what we should not do, do we lose our peace of conscience – our peace of mind?

It means this: I can take this Bible and I can say, “Here is God’s standard for your life – it is all here, Old Testament and New Testament – God’s standard for your life. It is a very exhaustive one – a very thorough one – and you will not find that any point of your life remains untouched by it.”

What is your reaction to that? Try it? A lot of people are trying. They are trying to live up to the New Testament, and it cannot be done. It cannot be done that way. I tell you, beloved, that if you are going to take this Book and try to live up to it, you will be far better advised to leave it alone; don’t you make the attempt. You will come back very sorry people in a little while if that is your line; and yet multitudes of Christians are trying it.

You have tried it and found that it condemns, condemns, condemns more than anything else (c.f. Galatians 3:16; II Corinthians 3:9). The one effect it has upon you is to make you feel what a miserable thing you are (Romans 7:24) and how impossible you are; that is the effect of it from that standpoint.

I bring you, not a Book but a Person – a Person Who has lived up to that standard, Who has fulfilled every minute demand with the most absolute success, who has satisfied God to the full under our conditions of life: *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15); subject to all the trials in spirit, in soul, in body; tried under all conditions, inwardly and outwardly; and made to pass through what you and I will never have to pass through. We shall never know the depth of His temptations – of His soul-sufferings, of that which tried Him to get Him to swerve from the path of obedience; we shall never know the same measure – in a far greater measure than we can ever know. He has been

subjected to the ultimate test of all God's perfect will and died and rose again. He has triumphed, succeeded, satisfied God and has, therefore, gone out from the realm of law. The law has no more power over Him; He is now far above law as law.

That Person – that living Person – in all the virtue, content, and power of that complete triumph, I bring to you; and I say, God in His great grace and wisdom and love has offered to allow that Person to live in the believer's heart in all the virtue of His Cross. He is there with all that accomplishment in His possession, living within. And I say: if you will yield your will, your heart, your mind to Him – you need not worry about the Book's standards any longer – you need not worry about the law any longer – you are free from the law, you are above the law.

The Lord Jesus embraced all the will of God on every point – on every matter – and perfected it in His own Person. Now He, as the perfect will of God, comes to reside in us; not to ask us to struggle toward something, but to work it out in us; not as a binding imposition of something upon our lives, but as a living power within.

It is inward; you see the difference between a Book and a Person – between Christianity as something to be lived up to and Christ living within.

The difference between law and grace is just this – the law was something presented, and people groaned under the weight of it in trying to fulfill it; under grace it is Someone resident within Who is perfectly capable of living up to the will of God and bringing us up to that standard by working within us "*to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). It is LIFE, not legality!

T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)
A Witness and a Testimony, May 1932

WHO SHOULD BE DISBARRED FROM SERVICE?

Christ, who once wept over Jerusalem must look down from heaven and weep over us. He came, and called Simon the Zealot, a radical anti-Roman,

and Matthew, a hated lackey of Rome, a pair as incompatible as any you could find in America today; but He put them to work, together, in His kingdom. Then He went to Samaria, revealed Himself to a woman with a shameful background of marital failures, and sent her out to share the revelation of God in Christ as if she were as good as anyone else. He must weep when He sees us wasting our time trying to figure out who we can disbar from serving Him in His church.

Walter Callison

Divorce – A Gift of God's Love, p. 10

SEEKING THE APPROVAL OF MEN

I cannot believe in the spirituality of any Christian man who keeps an eye open for the approval of others, whoever they may be. The man after God's own heart must be dead to the opinion of his friends as well as his enemies. He must be as willing to cross important persons as obscure ones ...

We'll never be where we should be in our spiritual lives until we are so devoted to Christ that we ask no other approbation than His smile. When we are wholly lost in Him the frantic effort to please men will come to an end. The circle of persons we struggle to please will be narrowed to One. Then we will know true freedom, but not a moment before.

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)
The Price of Neglect, p. 141

OUR GRACE? OR HIS?

Maybe the problem is with our grace, not with Christ's. ...

An astonishing variety of sinful people came to Jesus, and through faith in Him found themselves suddenly free and accepted, free to embark with Him on a new life, free to serve God. That sounds like the work of grace. Their futures were no longer controlled only by their natural instincts, strengths and desires; their futures were no longer controlled even by religious tradition or Jewish ►

laws; their futures were, instead, to be guided by the life and Spirit of the living Christ in a freedom never envisioned under the Law. ...

Grace and truth had come to them in Jesus Christ. They were accepted, they were forgiven, they were free. *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36). “But the preservation of freedom is an eternal struggle,” Jefferson said. It was not long after the church was founded that Christians in Galatia were being harassed by Judaizers from Jerusalem, insisting they be circumcised before they could be “true” Christians. ... [Paul the apostle’s] response to those who would legalistically impose these [requirements] on those who were Christ’s was quite clear:

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:23-29).

The old laws ... when legalistically applied under ... grace, become restrictions upon the free exercise of the work of the Holy Spirit, hindering the very life of the ever-present Christ in Christians. These actions are implications that the grace of Christ is not capable of personally guiding a person in what he or she may or may not do. To those who accept such restrictions, such interference in the work of Christ’s forgiveness, Christ’s calling, Christ’s Spirit in their lives, Paul gives a stern warning:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

If we accept Christ as “*head over all things to the church, which is His body*” (Ephesians 1:22b-23a), and if that body truly is to be “*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Ephesians 1:23b), then we must be careful not to hinder His Holy Spirit in the calling, the convicting, the saving and the employing of Christians in His service. The Scripture records His calling to be personal to the one called, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for all are the same in Christ (to paraphrase Galatians 3:28).

Walter Callison
Divorce: A Gift of God’s Love, pp. 20-22

COMMITMENTS OF FAITH

When participants in a relationship *cannot* break that relationship, then the chains of slavery have replaced love as the bond that holds them together. The more important the relationship, the more essential it is that either party have the right to break the relationship. This is a spiritual truth. Love must be free.

God did not stop Israel from choosing to leave Him; but He *did* give her a writing of divorcement.

The personal relationship we have with God through Christ is of our own free choice. If it were not, a relationship of love could not exist ...

The word commitment loses its meaning without the ability to break it. Relationships, which result from commitments of faith, are the most precious things in life; but any relationship is utterly destroyed, and becomes imprisonment if it is not kept by free choice. If my wife were forced to marry me, and were forced to remain married to me, how could I ever know she really loved me?

Walter Callison
Divorce: A Gift of God’s Love, p. 58

