



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 131

# *The Divine Work of CONTENTMENT*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*"I have learned ... to be content" (Philippians 4:11).*

Contentment is a rare quality among Adam's descendants. Adam and Eve had an abundant bounty from the hand of God all around them in the garden. There was only one thing that was withheld from them – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – but this was the very thing that they wanted, the thing that they desired. This one thing kept them discontented: if only they could have the fruit from this tree their lives would be complete and fulfilled – or so they thought.

*Discontentment* is the Satanic work upon the Adamic heart; whereas *contentment* is the Divine work upon the renewed mind – a heavenly learning process. It was even necessary that our apostle complete this course of spiritual instruction.

*"Not that I speak in respect of want [need]: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13).*

To which Paul added:

*"Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:8).*

### **Contentment Defined**

Noah Webster defines the word "*content*" as:

"Rest or quietness of the mind in the present condition; satisfaction which holds the mind in peace, restraining complaint, opposition, or further desire, and often implying a moderate degree of happiness ... Acquiescence; satisfaction without examination."<sup>1</sup>

The Greek word "*autarkēs*"<sup>2</sup> (content) is defined as:

*"Independent of external circumstances" – Thayer.<sup>3</sup>*

### **FOOD AND RAIMENT**

*"Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:8).*

Paul presents to us a low threshold standard in regard to our earthly needs. He had learned from the Lord that basic sustenance consisted of two simple things: "*food and raiment.*"

1. Noah Webster, *The American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.
2. Strong's Greek Lexicon #842.
3. Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1901.

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## Dear Siblings!

Greetings in our heavenly Father!

We'll it looks like spring is peeping out in PA. The window by my desk is open, and the daffodils are budding. Even though winter is my favorite season of the year, I do enjoy the marvelous variety of the changing seasons. Each one has its own special wonders for the hand of God.

### FREE BOOKS

Since Pope Benedict XVI is coming to the United States on April 15, *The Trinity Foundation* is offering two *FREE* books during April:

*Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church*, by John W. Robbins

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The list price for the two of them is \$32.90, but they are free to you for the asking, including postage. Simply write to request them at:

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### THIS ISSUE

We live in a very materialistic society. We all know this. It has an impact upon us more than any of us probably are willing to admit fully. We are expertly trained to consume and dispose, to want and to "need." It seems we can hardly help it; after all this is "the land of plenty." Yet it may not always be that way.

For some 25 years I have seen and read books that forecasted an economic collapse similar to the Great Depression of last century. These have not just been so-called "kooks" giving such warnings. Some have been economists, men of reason and sensibility. They have shown fatal flaws in our current cultural economic system.

In the past few months others have joined voice with their concerns. Many admit that the prospect for the days ahead may be strained at best. I am not trying to add my own conjecture to this mix. In this issue of the BSN I am, however, sharing with you a study on the spirit of contentment. This is a valuable outworking of God's Spirit in the lives of His children, regardless of the society, or economic conditions in which they may find themselves. May our hearts be tender to God's working of this important spiritual quality into our lives; yielding ourselves to its divine perspective. This is who we are. This is our family heritage.

Your fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

## Bible Student's Notebook

ISSN: 1936-9360

No. 131 – April 10, 2008

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" or "mission."

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Electronic Version (e-mailed to you): 1 Year (52 issues) – \$10; 2 Years (104 issues) – \$20  
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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.

The Bible Student's Notebook  
PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963  
Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studyshef.com  
www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor  
Andre Sneidar – Managing Editor  
Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

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This verse really can bring some much needed perspective to our daily lives. Although this is not the Madison Avenue/Wall Street/Ivy League-outlook upon life, it *is* nonetheless the Divine viewpoint.

Exactly what is it that we think we really *need*? Do we think we *need* cars, bank accounts, insurance policies, stocks and bonds, and retirement accounts? Although we may have some (or most) of these things, not *one* of them qualifies as what God has defined through Paul as a “*need*.”

Most of us, who read these words, live far beyond our *basic* needs. There is nothing wrong with abundance, but we must have the Divine wisdom to distinguish the difference between abundance and real need.

True spiritual life produces contentment, even within the confines of *basic* necessities: “*food and raiment*.” Amazing, isn’t it? What would have been *your* basic list to which you would have said, “*let us therewith be content*”?

James Strong defines “*food*” as “*nourishment*,”<sup>4</sup> while E.W. Bullinger defines “*raiment*”<sup>5</sup> as “*covering, i.e., shelter or clothing*.”<sup>6</sup>

So in these two words we have the three basic areas of need defined: food, shelter, and clothing.

The author of the Book of Hebrews writes:

*“Let your conversation [manner of life] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’”* (Hebrews 13:5).

Let us give heart to Paul’s instructional words:

*“Having food and raiment let us be therewith content”* (I Timothy 6:8).

## POSSESSIONS

*“And He said unto them, ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth’”* (Luke 12:15).

4. Strong’s Greek Lexicon, #1305 “*diatrophe*.”

5. Strong’s Greek Lexicon, #4629 “*skepasma*.”

6. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ quickly got to the bottom of things here.

What is it that really counts in a man’s life? What is the true measure of a man? Of what is a man’s life truly consisted?

The answer to all these things is *NOT* to be found in his possessions. The men with the most toys in the end are not necessarily the winners – “*for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*.”

Our Lord warned against *covetousness*. This is because possessions are *NOT* what life is about. Not even anywhere close; and the ironic thing about possessions is that they can have a way of possessing us.

## GREAT GAIN

*“Godliness with contentment is great gain”* (I Timothy 6:6).

The real value in life is not to be found in the possessions or the value systems of this world. All that this world has to offer, Paul refers to as “*uncertain riches*.”

To this the wisdom of Solomon speaks:

*“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven”* (Proverbs 23:5).

*“For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?”* (Proverbs 27:24).

According to Paul, just what is real and lasting gain then? “*Great gain*” is godliness joined with contentment.

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain

The believer’s bottom line is *NOT* Capital Gains, but the “*Great Gain*” of the Divine viewpoint.

Here is what our apostle wrote concerning “*Great Gain*” in its full context:

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all [all kinds of] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (I Timothy 6:6-12)*

## **ABASE AND ABOUND**

Read carefully Paul’s own testimony.

*“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).*

Divine instruction had done its grand spiritual work in Paul.

*“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).*

Paul had learned contentment from his Father. He knew how to be “abased” and he knew how to “abound.” He knew poverty and wealth. He knew the lows and highs of life. God had taught him to live in the divine viewpoint regardless of his circumstances. He had learned this not in theory, but in the experience of economic, material and physical extremes.

Paul had also learned what the foundation of “need” was – “food and raiment.” So when he spoke of being “abased” or “abounding” it was in relationship to this foundational standard of basic “food and raiment.” He literally knew it both ways. He knew God’s contentment in the contrasting conditions of his own life.

### **Abased**

When Paul says that he knew how to be “abased” – the word he uses is “*tapeinoō*” meaning “to depress; figuratively, to humiliate”<sup>7</sup> and is translated elsewhere in the King James Version as “bring low” and “humble.”

Paul knew what it was like to be depressed of physical needs. He knew what it was like to be brought low materially, and humbled financially. Consequently if the foundational standard of “need” is “food and raiment,” then Paul even knew what it was to experience the grace of God in the mist of hunger and nakedness.

He himself defines “abase” in the very context of his discussion:

*“I am instructed ... to be hungry ... and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).*

Paul’s own testimony was:

*“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace” (I Corinthians 4:11).*

*“In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (II Corinthians 11:27).*

Little wonder that Paul could pen:

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” (Romans 8:35, 37).*

### **Abound**

When Paul says that he knew how to “abound” – the word he uses is “*perisseuo*” meaning to “be in excess, be superfluous” and is translated elsewhere in the King James Version as “better” “enough and to spare,” “exceed,” “excel,” and “increase.”<sup>8</sup>

Paul also knew what it was like to be better off, to have an increase with enough to spare. Again, if the foundational standard of “need” is “food and raiment,” then Paul obviously also knew what it was to experience material increase in his life.

In the context of his discussion, he not only defines “abase” but he also defines “abound”:

*“I am instructed ... to be full” (Philippians 4:12).*

7. Strong’s Greek Lexicon #5013.

8. Strong’s Greek Lexicon, #4052.

Again, read the entire contrasting context:

*“I know **both** how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed **both** to be full and to be hungry, **both** to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).*

Since the divine standard of “need” is “food and raiment,” ANY “increase” in that is – “abundance.”

If we eat and are full, and have leftovers (“enough and to spare”) then we have an abundance.

If there is food in the pantry we have abundance.

If we have more than the raiment on our backs we live in abundance.

We have pantries and closets in which to store our abundance. We have garages, attics, sheds, safes, and banks in which to store our bounty. Regardless of where we may fit on the national poverty scale, this is the divine perspective.

## THE PURPOSE OF ABASEMENT

Paul wrote *“I know both how to be abased.”* What was the purpose of such abasement? Why would the great apostle of God to the gentiles need to learn to be abased?

As we have already seen, the word “abase” means “to depress; figuratively, to humiliate” and has been translated elsewhere in the King James Version as “bring low” and “humble.”

There is something in the very nature of success, achievement, advancement, wealth, prosperity, affluence, and possessions that can bring pride to the heart of man, causing him to brag. There is also something very humbling to be “brought low” materially and financially.

The divine fruit that can be brought forth in the state of deficiency is a trust and reliance upon God. A lack, materially, can be used by God to bring about a lack in pride, self-importance, arrogance, conceit, and smugness. Being “brought low” has a special way in helping us to look up, and to keep things in divine perspective.

God has used this method to teach and mature many of His servants. Paul learned through abasement.

*“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (II Corinthians 12:7).*

## Drive Us to Our Father

Our deficiencies drive us to our loving Father.

If we did not trust in Him, how else could we bear our deficiencies?

*“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).*

## Demonstration of His Grace

Our needs enable God to demonstrate His powerful grace.

Paul originally sought deliverance, but then learned that his Father’s grace was sufficient.

*“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My **grace is sufficient** for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (II Corinthians 12:8-10).*

## Compassion on Others

Our necessities enable us to have compassion on those around us.

We can only have real compassion toward others when we are able to identify with them.

*“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (II Corinthians 1:4).*

## THE PURPOSE OF ABUNDANCE

*“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; **That** they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [share]; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (I Timothy 6:17-19).*

*“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, **that** he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4:28).*

### Ready to Distribute

As we can tell from our texts, those with financial and material resources should enjoy them (“*all things richly to enjoy*”); but we can also see that they have a charge from God to be “*rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [share]*.” This is indeed the purpose of abundance (riches). We are to freely share our material possessions as a channel and expression of the love of God.

### Sharing with Others

God’s principle is that we not trust in, nor hoard uncertain riches, but use our resources to help meet the needs of others.

*“Ready to distribute ...” (I Timothy 6:18).*

*“Distributing to the necessity of saints ...” (Romans 12:13).*

*“That he may give to him that needeth” (Ephesians 4:28).*

*“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).*

*“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it*

*profit?” (James 2:15-16).*

### Sharing with Those Who Feed Us

It is also part of God’s plan that believers assist financially those who actually feed them spiritually. This is not mindless “contributions” to the so-called “Lord’s Work.” This is the sharing of resources that God has blessed us with, with those who actually feed us from the Scriptures. As we shall see in the passages below, this is not only the naturally honorable thing, it is also God’s design so that the faithful, nurturing teacher may be able to invest more time laboring in the Word.

*“Let him that is taught in the word communicate [share] unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Galatians 6:6).*

*“Let the elders [older men] that rule [lead] well be counted worthy of double honor [honorarium<sup>9</sup>], especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward” (I Timothy 5:17-18).*

*“For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn’ ... For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal [physical] things? ... Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? **Even so** hath the Lord ordained that they which preach [proclaim] the gospel should live of the gospel” (I Corinthians 9:9-14).*

*“Ye have well done, that ye did communicate [share] with my affliction ... Ye sent once and again unto my necessity [need]. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account” (Philippians 4:14:17).*

*(continued on page 1376)*

9. The word “honor” is where we get our words honoraria, honorarium. The Greek word “*timē*” that is here translated “honor” is also translated “prices” in Acts 4:34. James Strong (#5092) defines honor as “money paid, or valuables.”

# *The Greatest of These*

## Selected Readings on *Love*

(Part 1)

*"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (I Corinthians 13:13).*

### **LOVE IS COMPLETELY ADEQUATE**

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; No disease that enough love will not heal; No door that enough love will not open; No gulf that enough love will not bridge; No wall that enough love will not throw down; No sin that enough love will not redeem ...

Emmet Fox  
(1886-1951)

### **PERFECT LOVE**

We go forward in happy, humble, believing co-operation with the One Who is the Power, and He is moving out in power by us. However, the devil tells us that we are weak and fools and all the rest of it, for of course we are! The devil tells us the truth but he doesn't tell us the other truth, which is that we have a mighty Person inside us – he forgets that one!

And He is Love, perfect Love. He's perfect Love and He is loving some portion of His perfect Love in this common thing. Loving in me, loving by me, making me see with the eyes of love, feel with the feeling of love, and speak with the words of love. It's He coming through, He Who is perfect Love, perfect Holiness. So we see this is a wonderful, living relationship.

It isn't a thing, it isn't a doctrine, it isn't an experience ... it's a Person. It is two people living together. Eternal life is People Living together ... We, *"the fullness of Him that fills us all in all."*

Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)  
*Notes from Norman: Temptation* (1954)

### **GROWTH ON THE BASIS OF LOVE**

If I am going to grow spiritually, I shall only do so on the basis of love. I shall never grow because I get a lot more teaching. You do not grow by teaching. ... No, all the teaching does not necessarily mean that you grow. It is necessary as a background, but we grow by love.

Do not let anybody think we can dispense with the teaching and have the love and get on all right. That would be a contradiction of the Word altogether. The teaching has its place, it is absolutely necessary; but though I have everything and have not love, I am nothing (I Corinthians 13). So all is based on this.

T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)  
*His Great Love*

### **LOVE DOESN'T SEEK ITS OWN**

Love does not inquire into the character of the recipient but it asks what he needs. It does not love him because he is such-and-such a person but because he is there. In all this it is quite the opposite of natural love: it "does not seek its own."

It does not perform the characteristic natural impulse of love and life. Therefore it is basically independent of the conduct of the other person; it is not conditional but absolute. It wants nothing

for itself but only for others.

Therefore it is also not vulnerable. It never reacts but is always spontaneous, emerging by its own strength – rather, from the power of God. Love is the real God-likeness of man for which he has been created. In so far as love is in man he really resembles God and shows himself to be the child of God.

Emil Brunner (1889-1966)  
*The Letter to the Romans* (1959)

### **GOD COULD NOT POSSIBLY LOVE US MORE**

The powers of darkness want people ignorant of God, and they accomplish this by engaging men and women in the needless exercise of working

to win God's affection. Religion demands that people "walk the line" to win the affection of a God Who already could not possibly love them more.

Martin Zender  
*How to Be Free From Sin While Smoking a Cigarette* (2007)  
Page 25

### **ALWAYS HAS, ALWAYS WILL**

I am convinced that God is, always has been, and always will be the God of love, as most fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

Walter Callison  
*Divorce – A Gift of God's Love*  
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*(continued from page 1374)*

#### **Being God's Channel**

*"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also [giving]. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. **For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.**"* (II Corinthians 8:7-9).

*"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor"* (Ephesians 5:1-2).

The life of God's grace is about giving. This is seen preeminently in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Him, we are all stewards of the resources that come into our lives. They are not truly ours, but belong to the One to whom we belong, *"that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body"* (II Corinthians 4:10). Being God's channel to give to others reaps permanent dividends, *"laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come"* (I Timothy 6:19), producing *"fruit that may abound"* on our accounts (Philippians 4:17).

Special note should be made that we have no Pauline instruction on giving to organizations. *ALL* giving in Paul's Epistles is directly to *people*. This is God's method of making us His channels of love and grace. It is intimate, personal, close, warm – *person to person*. Institutional giving is a barrier to the divine process of life. The life of God working in and through the believer is substituted by cold, impersonal institutionalism. There is no life of God in institutions and organizations; it is resident in the person of the believer – uniquely, individually and distinctly.

A brother from over a half a century ago wrote concerning these two areas of giving in the dispensation of grace:

*"In God's family there is also a 'family budget,' to supply 'the necessity of the saints' and to support those who 'should live of the gospel'"* (Romans 12:13; I Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6). All this is scripturally observed in giving *"as every man purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver"* (II Corinthians 9:7). It is well known that covetous sect-builders loudly preach the 'necessity' of the Mosaic, legalistic tithing of a past dispensation." – E. Stevens, *God's Family*, 1950.

*"... See that ye abound in this grace also ..."* (II Corinthians 8:7). ■