



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 138

In Christ

OR, OUR UNION WITH THE LORD

(Part 1 – Crucified with Christ)

by – A.J. Gordon (1836-1895)

*“Created **in Christ Jesus**” (Ephesians 2:10).*

*“Of Him are ye **in Christ Jesus**” (I Corinthians 1:30).*

*“He hath chosen us **in Him** before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).*

No words of Scripture hold within themselves a deeper mystery than “*in Christ.*”

Christ, in raising man into union with Himself, raises him into all that belongs to Him, into His divine life, and into partnership with His divine work – so that he dies in His death; rises in His resurrection; ascends into His ascension; is seated with Him in His session at the Father’s right hand; and lives in His eternal life.

So marked is this fact, that it has led some to speak of the events of the Christian life as affording “a striking parallel to those of Christ’s.” Yet there is no parallel: parallels never meet. The very glory and mystery of our life is that it is one with the Savior’s and inseparable from it. It is not a life running alongside His, and taking shape and direction from it. It is His life.

How we misplace our experiences when we attempt, as mere copyists, to reproduce our Master’s life within us. Blessed is he who, instead of seeking to attain the likeness of Christ as something only without him, realizes that he has been planted in that likeness.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

*“I am crucified **with Christ**: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**” (Galatians 2:20).*

*“Knowing this, that our old man is **crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).*

If I am one with my Redeemer, then that term, “*Christ crucified*” (I Corinthians 1:23), involves another: “*I am crucified with Christ.*” Hence we by no means reach the true measure of our inheritance in the Cross when we regard the death of Christ as a formal transaction, by which One, years ago, paid a debt that belongs to us; thus is secured our release from its obligation, we having no other connection with the event than that of recipients of its blessings.

Paul saw a richer heritage for the saints than this, for with that key, *in Christ*, which opens for us all the

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Dear Siblings.

This Issue

In 1982 I came across a small, old book that was already then 110 years old – of course now it is 136 years old! It was written by A.J. Gordon (1836-1895) of Boston and was simply entitled ***In Christ***. Could there be a better title for a book?

At that time I was just beginning really to understand death to identity in Adam, and to embrace identity in Christ. As our Lord would have it, it was the right book at the right time. Over the years I have often pulled it from the shelf and reviewed the wonderful truths of identity *in Christ*.

I have hung on to this jewel – always knowing that at some point I would have the privilege of sharing from these pages with a new generation. This is that time. Starting with this issue we will run a series of abridgments from this rich work. In this first installment we will hear from our brother on the truth of our having been *crucified with* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jason

This past weekend my son Jason visited us here in PA. He and his wife currently live in Las Vegas where he is finishing up his culinary studies. As is his style, it was a surprise trip. What joy – beyond words – to be together again! Need I say that there were many laughs and hugs to be had?

My Mother's Birthday

My mother's 80th birthday was wonderful. My sister Judy and her husband Frankie came up from NC. They brought my mother's cousin with them. She received over 80 cards. She was thrilled! We also made her a special pictorial book and video celebrating her "first 80 years." I want to thank each of you who helped make this a wonderful day for her.

Until next week, I remain your kindred fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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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.

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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wards of Christian doctrine and life, he lets us into “*the fellowship of His sufferings*” (Philippians 3:10).

The great thought that filled his mind was his oneness with his Lord – a oneness not only of the present and the future, but equally of the past. So he utters those words, “*I am crucified with Christ.*”

That the crucifixion took place centuries ago does not separate us from it at all. While as an historical event we assign it to a specific time and place, it is just as near to us as it was to John or the Marys – touching all time with equal closeness. He is “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 13:8).

Spiritual union is entirely independent of all connections with time and space. In the depth of intimacy there can be no difference between us today and Paul, “*for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (I Corinthians 12:13), and therefore into one death, since as “*many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death*” (Romans 6:3).

We say Christ died that we might live. In a deeper sense it is true that He died that we might die. Thus we enter into oneness with His sufferings, and become partakers of His death.

“If one died for all, then were all dead” (II Corinthians 5:14).

As in the sin of one, that “*all sinned*” (Romans 5:12), so in the death of One, that “*all died!*” Wonderful words! With what triumphant assurance it enables us to take up the verdict of our acquittal from condemnation, “*he that is dead is freed from sin*” (Romans 6:7).

What has our death in Christ accomplished for us?

We Are Dead to the World

We are dead to the world system, whose friendship has been our deepest enmity to God, because drawing best affections and diverting our truest life from Him is at last overcome. The cross has sundered us from its enslaving bondage.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

We Are Dead to Sin

Sin may allure us for a season, but its tyranny is over.

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2).

We Are Dead to the Flesh

This enemy, our former relationship with Adam, has received his death. Christ put a nail through him. When the Judge calls for us now as He did of old for Adam, saying, “*Where art thou?*” He will no longer seek the living among the dead. Our life is in Christ. *In Him will we find it, and not in our dead man.*

“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24).

“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9).

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Recognizing now the realness of this union with Christ in His death, and the fullness of the blessings that flows therefrom, it only remains then for us to reckon the truth real to our own experience. Beholding how God has set Christ’s death to our account through our union with Him, take hold of the riches of grace and mercy which are made yours.

“For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:10-11).

Abridged from *In Christ*
Boston, 1872



Select Readings on Various Topics

Part VII

"Till I come, give attendance to reading ..." (I Timothy 4:13).

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books ..." (II Timothy 4:13).

MORE INTEREST IN ANTICHRIST THAN CHRIST

When I first came to California, the late Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein (1861-1945) wintered out here in Pasadena, and I went to visit him. He asked me how I liked California, and I replied, "I love it here, but it's very interesting that if I teach the Book of Revelation, I can fill the church (even during midweek service), but if I begin teaching the Epistle to the Romans, I can practically empty the church. I find there are people who will run all the way across this area to find out from a speaker just how many hairs are in the horse's tail in Revelation." He then made a statement to me that I shall never forget, "Dr. McGee, you're going to find out in your ministry that there are a great many people more interested in Antichrist than they are in Christ."

J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988)
Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee
Volume V, page 476

A MASTERPIECE OF YOUR LIFE

Have you ever felt that you've made a wrong decision and gone through the wrong door in life? You can rest assured of this – God's loving faithfulness is bigger than your foul-ups. His grace will ensure that His will is accomplished in your life. There's no need to worry that we have missed God's will and must now settle for His second best. God has no second best. He does all things well (see Mark 7:37), and would never allow

our mistakes or missteps to hinder His ultimate purposes.

Someone e-mailed a story to me that illustrates this point well. It shows how we can't mess up God's plan. He's far too ingenious and powerful to allow that.

A mother once took her son to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother was temporarily distracted by talking to a friend. Taking advantage of the chance to explore, the little boy walked away. He went through a door marked, "No Admittance."

When the house lights dimmed the mother turned to see that her son was missing. About that time, the curtains parted and the spotlight focused on the grand piano on stage. Seated at the keyboard was the little boy, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Then leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and he added a running obbligato.

Together, the old master and the young novice transformed what had appeared to be a terrible blunder into a creative masterpiece. The audience was overwhelmed by the beauty of that moment.

The moment had been redeemed.

Whatever your situation in life may be, you don't have to worry. Your Father's eternal arms are around you, working to accomplish His purpose for you. He will create a masterpiece of your life. You don't have to worry that your performance isn't as good as it should be. Trust Him and He will work with you where you are. In union with Him, the two of you will make beautiful music together.

Steve McVey
Grace Walk

“I”? OR “GOD”?

If you begin an account of your salvation with the word “I,” then you have something to boast about. The boasting may be Christianized (this is, hidden beneath layers of whitewash), but it's there. The gospel of Christ, however, eliminates all boasting. This is because it is an act of God, not man. After describing the nature of justification in Romans 3:21-26, the apostle Paul asks in verse 27: “*Where is boasting then?*” He answers his own question: “*It is excluded.*”

Do you begin an account of your salvation with the word “God?” Good. You have repudiated the false teaching of human free will. You have rejected the false pride of human achievement. You have embraced the truth: salvation is of God and not of your decision concerning God. God has graciously granted you to be believing this. So rejoice.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (I Corinthians 4:7).

Martin Zender
The Really Bad Thing About Free Will: A Critical Look at the Salvation by Willpower Doctrine (2006), page 75-76

COMPLETE STRANGERS

Many of us are guilty of ignoring the positive qualities of those closest to us while doing and saying good things to complete strangers.

Peter M. Lord
Bless and Be Blessed (2004), page 133

PARALYSIS FROM PAST MISTAKES

Do not let any of the things of the world or past mistakes paralyze your hearts. I believe there are Christians who have allowed some of their past mistakes to paralyze them. You were so bright and cheerful in your spiritual life once, and then you made some tragic mistake or had something happen to you ...

Past wrongs that have been done to you, past failures, times you thought you were going to win and did not, or present sins or discouragement – these things are not mental at all. They are deeper than that ... and they prevent us from believing.

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)
Rut, Rot or Revival: The Condition of the Church, pages 162-163

TRUST IN THE LORD

Trust in the Lord and your way will be made clear. Frustration comes when things aren't progressing according to *our* plans. But our timetable isn't the one which guides the flow of our lives. Relax!

We can be fretful through our day or we can have fun – either way our Father will accomplish His purpose for us. Don't fret just because He won't align Himself with your timing!

During the waiting process, during the frustrations caused by your own drivenness, God is at work, accomplishing in you and in your circumstances all that needs to be done. So relax. Don't worry. He knows and understands your schedule and your commitments, but He has His own agenda.

Will you submit yours to Him?

God will accomplish what needs to be done in His way and according to His timing. Rest in Him. Your responsibility is not to reach your goal, but to be a willing vessel in His hand. Your goal is to be one of trusting in Him and waiting patiently.

Relax. Your Father is not limited by time demands. So savor every moment of each day. Urgent needs will be with you always. Don't miss the joy of these days by self-imposed demands. Your loving Father makes no demands, but gently leads you to accomplish the things He has purposed for you to do.

On His last night in the world, Jesus said to His Father, *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have accomplished what You gave Me to do."* Yet He never rushed or became stressed by His schedule even once.

Your works have been prepared in advance (Ephesians 2:10). It's really not even up to you to accomplish them. In reality, He has already performed all our works for us. (*"Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us"* Isaiah 26:12) Our role is to rest in Him and act according to His guidance and empowerment, leaving the results entirely up to Him.

Steve McVey
Grace Walk

GOD GIVES THE INCREASE

I Corinthians 3:6-7 states, *"... I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase ..."*

This Scripture gives us insight into the ways of God. It speaks of how we are to minister to people, not getting upset with them when they do not understand what it is that they are being taught. Only God can and will give the increase! This means that it takes the Spirit of God to reveal

(unveil) spiritual things to man. You may minister to someone on a certain subject and they will not understand it. Someone else may minister to them on the same subject, and then God will give the increase. Do not be upset with this! Remember ... It takes God to give the increase. God may use you to plant and someone else to water, or He may use someone else to plant and you to water; but only God can give the increase. We must recognize that it takes people quite a long time to grasp spiritual things.

The seed of the Word of God must be planted in the heart of a person, then it must be watered, and then it must have time to grow. Finally, God will cause that seed to bring forth the fruit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. He uses man to plant and to water, but He is the only one Who can give the increase (to make something come alive, or be quickened in a person's heart).

Thomas Kissinger
The Glory of God and the Honor of Kings
Devotion for February 7

THE LORD WILL SORT THINGS OUT

"Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox"
(Proverbs 14:4).

In a busy life, there is a gathering of that which is good, also of that which is no good. The good can be used, the other set aside.

We must endeavor to continue serving the Lord the best we know how, and not be hindered because we might inadvertently make mistakes.

In the end the Lord sorts things out.

John E. Wheatley
Tyne & Wear, United Kingdom

THE LAWS OF NATURE

Corn will grow for an atheist if he does the right things, and it will not grow for a spirit-filled

Christian if he does not follow the natural laws of corn-growing.

Peter M. Lord
Bless and Be Blessed (2004), page 72

TRUE HAPPINESS

If we have the Lord Jesus, we have all – without Him, we have nothing. You can be happy without money, without liberty, without parents, and without friends, if He is yours. If you have not Christ, neither money, nor liberty, nor parents, nor friends can make you happy. Christ, with a chain, is liberty; liberty without Christ is a chain. Christ without anything is riches – all things, without Christ, is poverty indeed.

Miles J. Stanford (1914-1999)
None But the Hungry Heart

GOD WILL ACCOMPLISH HIS GOAL

Are you sometimes confused by your circumstances? Have you ever been emotionally depleted by things that have happened with your finances, parents, children, even your ministry? Have you ever felt like life is beating you down? Have you doubted God? You didn't want to doubt, but you did anyway.

When we feel like this (and we all do at times), just trust your Father. Even when you don't understand, trust Him. As you grow in your knowledge of your loving *Abba*, you will learn to accept events as they unfold. He is the Great 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. Our impatience and frustration is born of our immaturity, but it is through those very trials we protest that God's Spirit will bring us into a greater maturity.

God 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. You bring trouble upon yourself when you confuse the two roles.

Relax, and enjoy your journey. Rest in your Father's sovereignty. Your life is an adventure, planned and performed by Him. We grow weary when we try to do what He alone can do. It is through our trials that He will lift our controlling need to be in charge. We must see that we are not in charge, but God alone determines and controls the unfolding of our destiny. Control is an arena for which we are not suited. Our Father, on the other hand, is perfectly suited for that role.

Steve McVey
Grace Walk

THERE IS IN HIM AN ALL-SUFFICIENCY

It is in the heart of our God to give us the chief and the best.

Had there been a greater, and a better, and a sweeter, and a more satisfying portion than Himself – then that portion would have been ours. But since there is not, nor can be, a greater than Himself – the love, the everlasting, changeless love that He bears to us, constrains Him to give Himself as our God, our

Portion, our All ...

There is in Him ...

an all sufficiency of love to comfort us;
an all sufficiency of strength to uphold us;
an all sufficiency of power to protect us;
an all sufficiency of good to satisfy us;
an all sufficiency of wisdom to guide us;
an all sufficiency of glory to reward us;
and an all sufficiency of bliss to make us
happy here, and happy to all eternity!

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)
The Christian's Joint Heirship





Reader's Question Box #3

Q: I have really gained a lot of insight on the soul, that it is not immortal, and what death really is. Thanks. But I am stuck on, where Paul talks about having an out of the body experience (II Corinthians 12:1-4). This doesn't make sense in light of the other things.

A: I appreciate your comments about the teachings on the soul and death.

I do understand your concern with II Corinthians 12. It is often hard, when approaching the Bible with new light, to be able to see clearly the true meaning of passages that have long been under the control of traditional interpretation. This passage is obviously one of those.

As you know, traditional interpretation will not allow this passage to be understood by the plain teaching of the rest of Scripture concerning the soul and death. So, let's take another look.

Since the idea that in this passage "Paul talks about having an out of the body experience" would violate other Scriptures, it *must* have another meaning.

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Corinthians 12:1-4).

Here is my current understanding of Paul's teaching in this passage:

#1. Whatever Paul is writing about, he clearly states three times, "I cannot tell."

Paul was unsure of what had actually happened. If Paul was unsure, obviously we can not know more about it than he did. Therefore, we can't establish any new teaching or doctrine based on Paul's own uncertainty.

#2. Whatever Paul is writing about, his words "in the body" and "out of the body" can't violate the clear teaching of the rest of the Scriptures.

#3. The context of Paul's words is not death, but "visions and revelations of the Lord."

THE REALITY: According to verse 1, Paul is talking about *the reality* of "visions and revelations."

THE SCENE: According to verse 2, *the scene* of these "visions and revelations" took place in "*the third heaven.*"

THE PROCESS: According to verses 2 and 3, Paul discusses the uncertainty of *the process* of the revelation. Paul was unsure if these "visions and revelations" in "*the third heaven*" were "in the body" or "out of the body." He did not know whether they were received *bodily* (i.e., "in the body") or *spiritually* (i.e., "out of the body"). In other words, he did not know if it was a *bodily* transportation into "*the third heaven,*" or whether it was a dream or trance ("out of the body" – outside of his body, i.e., outside of his natural sensory perception).

Paul was sure of *the reality* of the revelation; he was also sure of *the scene* of the revelation; however, what he was *unsure* of was *the process* of the revelation.

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr
Windber, PA

