



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume VI
Issue 150

Immanuel

God Is with Us!

by – C. Baxter Kruger

“**I**mmanuel.” That is God’s one word summary of it all. You know what “Immanuel” means, don’t you? It means “God is with us.”¹ Note carefully that it does not mean God *was* with us or that God *will be* with us. It means God is with us and we are with God. This is not a neat religious idea; and it is certainly not an invitation that depends upon our religious performance. Immanuel is a rock-solid fact established by God. It is a divine declaration of the way things really are. God has not abandoned us. He has embraced us and made us His in Jesus Christ.

But what exactly does it mean to say that God is with us and we are with God? It certainly means that in His great passion for us God has stepped forward and established a relationship with us. He has claimed us as His own, blotted out our failures, removed everything that separates us from Him, redeemed us, accepted us and welcomed us. So at the very least, Immanuel means that we are not separated from God. We are not absent from Him and He is not absent from us. We are together and God is thrilled about it.

But there is something else, something marvelous, indeed astonishing, that is being said here about us, about you and me and our humanity, about our human existence. In this one word, “Immanuel,” God is telling us that He has no intention of being God without us! He is telling us that the reason He made us is to share His life with us, for sharing life is

the purpose of being with someone. Yet even here we are only scratching the surface, for Immanuel is not only a statement about God’s intention, but it is a statement about what is happening in our lives now. Immanuel means that God is now sharing His life with us and we are now sharing in God’s life. We are inside the circle of God’s life now, and thus the life we are living is not our own. Our life is nothing less than a participation in God’s life!

Let me share a story that brings this home to us. Several years ago, while I was sorting through mail, my son and one of his buddies strolled into the den where I was sitting. I did not know his friend at all. We were complete strangers – I didn’t even know his name – but what happened has become to me a concrete picture of Immanuel.

While this little boy did not know me or what I was like, my son did. My son had a relationship with me. He knew my love for him and my delight in him. He knew the assurance of my acceptance. He was at-home with me and thus free to be himself, free to come into my presence and play; and he did just that. In the freedom of acceptance he sauntered into my presence, bounded onto the couch and engaged me in play. The next thing I knew, we were rolling around on the floor,

(see **IMMANUEL**, page 1523)

1. “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

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Dear Saints,

150th ISSUE

May, 1989 was the publication date of the first issue of the *BSN*. It is hard to believe that nearly 20 years have passed. How well I remember us laying out that first issue.

Editors Andre Sneidar and Rick Lemons were with me on that very first issue. Thank you brothers! You have been true gifts to me.

Speaking of gifts, last issue's author Aaron Locker (in a study of the Greek words "*Basanizo*" and "*Aion*" in the *Reader's Question Box*) has joined in assisting us in our editing work. Aaron is the son of Neal and Carollyn Locker – dear friends for nearly 30 years. In fact Neal was our Managing Editor for the first 8 issues, and has been a continual help and encouragement to me through the life of the *BSN*.

God has been so good to accomplish this heart-passion that I have had since 1976 (with our first periodical *The Biblical Standard*; and the subsequent, *Old Paths, Forgotten Truths, and Grace Testimony* – all predecessors to the *BSN*).

My heart is humbled and joyed with every issue put forth. It is my continual, earnest prayer that these feeble efforts are used of our Lord for His own purpose and pleasure.

IMMANUEL

Do not allow yourself to be misled by the simple title of our lead article in this current issue of the *BSN*. Don't say to yourself, "I don't need to read this one."

Immanuel is in fact another great installment of truth from the pen of C. Baxter Kruger. Again, as with other of his works, the reading of this moved me to tears. It is a *powerful* message that could have a *real* impact on your daily life.

My love to each of you!

Until next week,



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.

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IMMANUEL (continued from page 1521)

wrestling and laughing and having the time of our lives – and his buddy was right in there with us.

Later on I realized that something quite critical had taken place, a parable had been enacted. Think of it this way. Suppose that you deleted my son from the equation for a moment. Suppose that his buddy walked into the den alone. I suspect, given that we were complete strangers, that he would never have bounded onto the couch and engaged me in play. Without my son's presence there would have been no assurance of acceptance, no at-homeness, and thus no freedom to saunter into my presence.

But my son was present; and the marvelous thing that happened was that my son's relationship with me, his knowledge of my acceptance, his freedom to come into my presence, worked its way into his buddy's heart. It was simple, yet remarkable. This boy was ushered into something that was not his and he got to share in it. He got to share in my son's relationship with me. He participated in my son's freedom. He played in it.

Now, here is the question. Could it be that something very much like this is going on in your life but you do not know it? Could it be that you, like my son's buddy, have been included in someone else's life? Could it be that your interests and burdens, your delights and loves, are not, strictly speaking, yours at all? What if they have their origin in someone else who is secretly sharing them with you? What if your creativity and work, your love for your family, your delight in music, golf and fishing, your concern for things to be right, your joy in giving, all originate not with you but with someone else far greater than you, someone who loves you so much that He shares His excellence, His beauty, His wholeness and fullness with you?

That is exactly, I believe, what Immanuel means. We have all been given a staggering gift, the gift of participating in Jesus Christ's relationship with God the Father Almighty. This is the secret of your existence. You are a participant in Jesus' life. Just like my son's buddy, you have been ushered into

something that is not yours, included in it, and you are living in it.²

What You Know but Never Knew

Let me tell you another story that will help clarify what I am saying. On a plane, recently, I sat by a biologist. Actually, he called himself a "systematic, evolutionary microbiologist"! He was returning from what seemed to me to be very like an Indiana Jones type expedition in the Caribbean. It was, in fact, a research trip dedicated to studying various species of plants.

Now, I admit, I am not a big plant man. Talking about plants, especially rare species that the average person does not even know exist, is not my idea of fun. Yet this guy was so excited I could not help but get caught up in his enthusiasm. Far from being dry and crusty, this man had fire in his belly and was absolutely thrilled with his work.

He launched into this story about plants that were on the verge of extinction, how important they were, what could be done to save them and why we must save them. He just could not bear the thought that we had already lost and were now losing whole species of plants to extinction. He even pulled out his napkin and drew diagrams and charts. I must say, I learned more botany in that stretch of time than I had learned in years of schooling.

When he finished, I leaned over and asked one simple question. "Where," I asked, "did you get your passion for plants?" It caught him off-guard and he looked at me like I had a third eye. I said, "I mean, it is not every day that you meet someone who has such a deep burden for the welfare of plants. I am just curious as to its origin. Did you grow up around botanists? Are your parents botanists? Did you just decide one day that you were going to love plants?" He said that he had never really thought about it much.

I told him, "I know the origin of your deep passion

2. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

for plants. There is only one human being in the universe who really cares for plants. He is delighted in His Father's creation, burdened for its welfare and preservation. He knows the plants by name, every one of them. And I know who you are. You are a participant in Jesus Christ's passion for His Father's creation."

"That fire in your belly is not yours. It does not have its origin in you. It comes from Jesus Christ. He puts His passion for His Father's plants in you. He humbly shares His delight in them, His burden for their welfare, His desire for their wholeness with you. And you are living in it. You go to sleep at night, wake up in the morning, and work all day in His concerns and creative ideas.

"There is far more going on in your life than you ever imagined. You are living in Jesus' life, participating in the relationship that Jesus Christ has with His Father. You live in the life of God and you are not sure that God even exists!"

Immanuel is not a theory. It is *the secret*. Jesus Christ is not tucked off in some closet in heaven waiting for a day to come when He can become a real factor in the universe. Wake up!

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Do you not see who you are and with Whom you are involved? Do you not see what is happening in your life, what great and astounding thing has been conferred upon you?

Let me tell another story. A young mother walked into my office with a stack of newsletters in her hand. She plopped them down on my desk and exclaimed, "I feel like a pile of manure! I have been reading these newsletters from friends and missionaries and they are all out there doing these wonderful things for God. And it just hit me what a worthless life I have. For Pete's sake, I do three loads of laundry a day, and when I am not doing laundry I am grocery shopping, and when I am not grocery shopping I am unloading the groceries or cooking them or cleaning up after cooking them.

And somewhere in there I am trying to keep this mess of a house presentable, stay in touch with three kids, keep them clothed and on schedule and find a little time for my husband. I am too tired even to read my Bible. What do I have to offer God?"

"Wait!" I said. "Just wait a minute. We need to punch the pause button and rethink all of this. I happen to know that just yesterday you spent two hours shopping for a coat for your daughter to keep her warm. And not just any coat, mind you, but one that she would like, that would be large enough to wear next year but not look like it, and one that was on sale! And I happen to know that you found the right one exactly. Now here is my question: Where did your concern for your daughter come from? I mean, did you just decide that you were going to be a good mother and flip a switch that created this burden for your daughter's welfare? What is the origin of your love for her or for your family, of your concern that they eat right every day, that they are nurtured? Where did you get this burden for a neat and orderly household?"

"You are thinking like a Deist. You are thinking that God created this universe, wound it up like a great clock, set it running and then stepped out of the picture.

"You are thinking that God is not here. And you are thinking that all that is going on in your life, your cooking and cleaning and grocery shopping, your love for your children and husband and your concern for their welfare and all that that generates, are all outside the circle of God's life. And because you are thinking this way you are very frustrated, you have lost the fullness and joy of it all, and you are desperately trying to figure out how to do all of this and then tack on something for God.

"You are missing the point. And the point is that Jesus Christ is not up there waiting for you to do something for Him. He is here in you. He is sharing His burden for His sheep (your family) and their livelihood with you. And you wake up in it, live in it all day, and you really love it. It makes you sing. But you do not see it for what it actually

is. It is not *your* burden and delight, but *His*, and there is no more holy thing in all the world than cooking a meal for your family. For that is nothing short of God the Father Himself, through His Son, sharing His royal feast with His loved ones. It is a divine event!

“There is far more going on in your life than you ever dreamed. If you do not see it, you will die a slow and painful death – an ever intensifying boredom that is so deep and pervasive you lose all passion.”

Let me share one more story. I was having dinner recently with a professional golfer who is also a Christian. He leaned over to me and with great seriousness asked, “How does God fit into golf?” I know he was serious, earnestly so. I could see a profound dilemma in his eyes; for in his heart he wanted to play golf – the game thrilled him – but in his head he could not quite figure how this was remotely related to honoring God, unless he managed to win on occasion and could then give the glory to God. He was torn.

His question is one of the greatest theological questions I have ever been asked. What did I answer? I told him the story of my son and his buddy in the den, and then the story of the biologist! I also reminded him of Eric Liddel, the Olympic champion, in the movie *Chariots of Fire* and that powerful scene, when he said to his sister, “*God made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure.*”

My golfer friend had also forgotten the good news of Immanuel. He was thinking that God was merely a spectator – up there somewhere watching the game. Thus, he saw his delight in golf as *his* rather than as the *Father’s*. Yet the truth is that golf is not *his* domain. It has been invaded by Jesus Christ. It is one of the habitations, the dwelling places, of Divine life. What do you think? Is Jesus up there in some celestial prison waiting for us to get our religion right? Has he vacated the premises, left us as orphans outside of His life? Is He no more than a monk who created a religious order? I think not.

Immanuel is not an invitation. It is the truth. Jesus Christ is not absent, but present. He is wonderfully and humbly and secretly sharing Himself and *His life* with His Father with us. It is this divine dance, this circle of delight and joy, beauty and excellence and glory, and nothing less, that inhabits our golfer’s heart, inspires him and thrills him. Jesus Christ couldn’t care less if we glorify Him in golf. His passion is that we play golf in His glory.

How does God fit into golf? The real question is, would the game be any fun at all without Him? Would *living* be any fun without Him? Well, of course it wouldn’t!

Living without sharing in this life would be pure drudgery, for what makes relationships, friendships and conversations so good; what makes work, teaching, doctoring and caring so noble; what makes baseball, gardening, fishing, and racing cars so enjoyable; what makes art, music and dancing so alive is that they are all, in their deepest sense, the dwelling places of the life of Father and Son.

We cannot see the glory – “It’s just golf, just baseball, just fishing. It’s just grocery shopping and cooking and cleaning, just supper. It’s just botany, just work, just sunshine, just flowers, just music. It’s just my daughter coming in to bother me again.” We do not see what is really happening in us and around us. We have no idea what great and astounding thing has been granted to us. We do not know who we really are. Immanuel means that human existence has been baptized in the glory, the fullness, the excellence, the beauty, the *life* of God.

We spend our lives moving from one thing to another in one long, desperate and frantic search for what is real! But the gospel is really quite simple. The Father is shouting His eternal word, “Thou art Mine!” and is calling us to answer, “Yes, I am!”

“... *Great is the mystery of godliness: God ... manifest in the flesh ...*” (I Timothy 3:16).

Taken from *The Secret*





Approved Workmen

Select Readings on the Study of the Scriptures (Part 2)

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15).

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

God gave the prophecies, not to gratify men's curiosity by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and His own providence, not the interpreter's, be thereby manifested to the world.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727)
Commentary on Daniel

TIED TO THE WORD OF GOD

When doctrine is carved in stone as 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 deficient understanding and can precede 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. We need to tether ourselves to God's Word unadulterated by any tradition. This would allow us to stand firm upon our convictions without necessarily having to agree on every point of doctrine.

Ross Purdy
I Will Have One Doctrine & One Discipline (Bible Student's Press, 2006)

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 & One Discipline
(Bible Student's Press, 2006)*

ACCEPTING WHAT GOD'S BOOK REVEALS

Outside of this blessed Book we know absolutely nothing of the future. The world is dark, and this Book is the only light in it. Speculation, imagination, reason and philosophy have neither part nor lot here; they have no value whatever in answering the question "What is Truth" ...

This Book claims to be from God. It claims to make known His thoughts, and to reveal His will and purposes. The men who wrote it wrote down not what they imagined, or presumed to reason out; not what they thought would prove acceptable to others; not what they themselves might deem wise, or think beneficent; but they wrote down what God thought, what God chose to say, what God commanded, yea and what God meant!

“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

What our attitude ought to be, therefore, is perfectly clear, and our duty is very simple: to accept what they reveal as the truth of God. We have no option whatever, no right of debate or appeal as to things revealed: we are merely like students who sit down to study the statutes of the Realm. The one and only question is, what do they say? No matter whether the student can understand them, explain them, or harmonize them with his own views or with the views of others. His duty as a student, is to know them; and as a citizen, to obey them!

So these Holy Scriptures reveal what God pleases to say, and our duty is to accept and believe them because of that, and not because of our ability to understand them. The one great difficulty is that the authority of Scripture is not regarded as absolutely supreme, so long as men insist on squaring Scripture with reason, so long can there be no certainty in the things of Faith. There can be no unity of doctrine unless there be first a unity of authority. We have no more to do, and no less, than Israel had when Moses came forth from God, and down from Horeb, and made known what God had written and revealed.

E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)
Prophetic Study: Its Importance and Interpretation
(Bible Student's Press, 2008)

PREJUDICE OF ORTHODOXY

Orthodoxy is, in the Church, very much what prejudice is in the single mind. It is the premature conceit of certainty. It is the treatment of the imperfect as if it were the perfect.

Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)
Christian Quotation of the Day (2007)

CHAPTER AND VERSE DIVISIONS

Our Bible's chapter and verse divisions are in place to allow us to quickly locate and refer to a particular portion of Scripture. But we must always keep in mind as we read and study the Bible that these divisions are in fact man-made.

“The first English edition to use chapter numbers was Wycliffe's version of 1382. Verse divisions

in the Greek New Testament were introduced by Robert Stephanus of Paris in 1551. The Latin Vulgate edition of 1555 was the first entire Bible to use chapter and verse numbers; the first English New Testament to contain them was the Geneva Bible of 1560.”¹

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
Daily Email Goodies #434 (2007)

WISDOM

Knowledge is neutral; the use we make of it is wisdom. Sadly, that is often lacking, and distorted by money and politics. But it is not wisdom to persist in believing in falsehoods because it makes us feel good, or not wanting to know in case we have to change our opinions.

Alun Argyll
Biodynamics and Science (Organic Chickens)

RIGHTLY DIVIDING

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

The Word of Truth, then, has right divisions, and it must be evident that, as one cannot be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” without observing them, so any study of that Word which ignores those divisions must be in large measure profitless and confusing. Many Christians freely confess that they find the study of the Bible weary work. More find it so, who are ashamed to make this confession.

C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth (1885)
Page 10 (Classic Reprint Press, 2008)

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 ...

(see **WORKMEN**, next page)

1. Eugene H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate*, 1981, page 3.

Angel in My Pocket

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In 1969 the movie *Angel in My Pocket* came out starring Andy Griffith, Lee Meriwether, and Jerry Van Dyke. It was a family oriented comedy, directed by Emmy award winner Alan Rafkin who was also one of the directors of the beloved *Andy Griffith Show*.

I must admit to you that I don't carry around any angels in my pockets – I never have – but for a good many years now, I confess to you that I have carried two unusual things in my pocket almost all the time. In addition to being helpful in my own unique day-to-day activities, I use these items as a simple *reminder* of two things that are very important to me.

The items that can be found in my pocket, at almost any given time, are: a yellow highlighter and a large eraser.

The highlighter reminds me to “highlight” what is really important in my life. God has placed such wealth in our lives, but it easily can be crowded out by less than meaningful things. The highlighter reminds me to take note and “mark” what is of real value, and not to let them go unnoticed.

The eraser reminds me that life is *full* of mistakes, and that Divine grace “erases” them for a fresh start. Every day is a brand *NEW* day given to us by God; in Him is complete and full forgiveness, and walking in the light of His amazing truth, we also can enjoy daily *forgetting* and *newness*.

At the end of each day I have “forgotten” the erased things – “*forgetting those things which are behind*” (Philippians 3:13), and I remember the “highlights” of the day.

“... *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Philippians 4:8).

These two simple things in my pocket are of practical use to me everyday, but they are also reminders of two very important principles.

Recently while on an outing with family and friends, I reached into my pocket for my car keys and my eraser fell out to the ground underneath the car. There seemed to be some interest on the faces of those closest to me as to why I would have a large eraser in my pocket.

During that quick moment of retrieving the eraser, I briefly mentioned what having it in my pocket reminds me of.

Later that evening I received the following email from a dear and longtime friend that was with me during my eraser's recovery.

“Today you said something along the lines of ‘I keep an eraser in my pocket so that I can erase all the mistakes I make throughout life.’ It was a short moment, but I wanted to let you know that you really helped me out when you said that.

“I struggle a lot with forgiving myself and leaving my failures and mistakes in the past. Every day memories of the past pop into my head; memories of stupid things I've done in the past and while I want to say ‘that was the past, I've grown since then,’ most of the time I feel so ashamed and disappointed in myself. Keeping an eraser with me (metaphorically, of course) is something I could really benefit from and more importantly, it would help me to make others feel better about my mistakes too.

“I thank God for moments like these in which little nuggets of helpful information and advice are thrown my way and I thank you for sharing your little eraser story.”

■

WORKMEN (continued from previous page)

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, page 141

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