



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume VII  
Issue 163

# The Simplicity of Prayer

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Corinthians 11:3).*

There is simplicity in all things in Jesus Christ. It is religion that makes “spiritual” things complex and cumbersome – creating a “spirit of bondage.” We have not received such a “spirit of bondage” from our Father, but instead we have received from Him “the spirit of adoption”<sup>1</sup> leading us to call Him “Abba” in our prayer life.

*“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).*

Notice here, in this passage from Paul, that we possess from our Father’s Spirit a heartfelt “cry” unto Him – calling Him “Abba,” or in modern terms, *Daddy!*

### A RELIGIOUS RITUAL

Christendom has presented a picture of prayer as one of coming into God’s “presence” and spending much time and effort “talking” with Him there – trying to convince Him of many things. Many even bring their “prayer list” with them, when coming into His “presence.”

The simple fact is that we already are in the presence of God; we *live* there. It is not some place that we “go.” It is some place that we simply “are.”

It is where we live and move and have our being.

*“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).*

What a wonderful thing it is to “live” in the Father. What an amazing thing it is to “move” in Him. What an astonishing thing it is to “have our being” in Him.

Each of us has the privilege to live in the reality of union with our Father as each day begins and unfolds. What a blessed thing to be in constant communion with Him – heart to heart. There is no need for us to maintain a “conversation” (traditional prayer) to have this fellowship and communion with Him. It is already fully ours, secured and maintained in His very own nature.

What is often paraded as “prayer” is artificial and pretentious; and many “for a **show** make long prayers” (Luke 20:47), using “vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:7).

(see **PRAYER**, page 1636)

1. See a study of the wonderful doctrine of “Adoption” in the article entitled *Sonship* in *Bible Student's Notebook* #146.

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## Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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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)

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# Faith: The Gift of God

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God” Ephesians 2:8).*

## ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD

*“... He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, ‘What doest Thou?’” (Daniel 4:35).*

*“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).*

*“In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11).*

## GOD IS THE SOURCE OF FAITH IN BELIEVERS

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

*“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).*

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

## GOD IS THE SOURCE OF THE CURRENT UNBELIEF IN UNBELIEVERS

*“Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth” (Romans 9:18).*

*“(According as it is written, ‘God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;’) unto this day” (Romans 11:8).*

*“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Romans 11:32).*

## GOD WILL BE THE SOURCE OF FAITH IN ALL

*“According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).*

*“... He hath given assurance [faith]<sup>1</sup> unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).*

*“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11);*

*“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Corinthians 12:3).*

- 
1. This word means “faith.” The word translated “assurance” here is Strong’s Greek Lexicon #4102, *pistis*. It is rendered by the King James Version translators as “assurance” twice, “fidelity” once, “believe” three times, and it is rendered “faith” 241 times in the following verses: Matthew 8:10; 9:2, 22, 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21; 23:23; Mark 2:5; 4:40; 5:34; 10:52; 11:22; Luke 5:20; 7:9, 50; 8:25, 48; 17:5, 6, 19; 18:8, 42; 22:32; Acts 3:16 (2x); 6:5, 7, 8; 11:24; 13:8; 14:9, 22, 27; 15:9; 16:5; 20:21; 24:24; 26:18; Romans 1:5, 8, 12, 17 (3x); 3:3, 22, 25, 27, 28, 30 (2x), 31; 4:5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 (2x), 19, 20; 5:1, 2; 9:30, 32; 10:6, 8, 17; 11:20; 12:36; 14:1, 22, 23 (2x); 16:26; I Corinthians 2:5; 12:9; 13:2, 13; 15:14, 17; 16:13; II Corinthians 1:24 (2x); 4:13; 5:7; 8:7; 10:15; 13:5; Galatians 1:23; 2:16 (2x), 20; 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23 (2x), 24, 25, 26; 5:5, 6, 22; 6:10; Ephesians 1:15, 2:8; 3:12, 17, 4:5, 13; 6:16, 23; Philippians 1:25, 27; 2:17; 3:9 (2x) Colossians 1:4, 23, 2:5, 7, 12; I Thessalonians 1:3, 8, 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10; 5:8; II Thessalonians 1:3, 4, 11; 3:2; I Timothy 1:2, 4, 5, 14, 19 (2x); 2:7, 15; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 6, 12; 5:8, 12; 6:10, 11, 12, 21; II Timothy 1:5, 13; 2:18, 22; 3:8, 10, 15; 4:7; Titus 1:1, 4, 13; 2:2; 3:5; Philemon 5, 6; Hebrews 4:2; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 38; 11:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 37; 12:2; 13:7; James 1:3, 6; 2:1, 5, 14 (2x), 17, 18 (3x), 20, 22 (2x), 24, 26; 5:15; I Peter 1:5, 7, 9, 21; 5:9; II Peter 1:1, 5; I John 3:20; Jude 3, 20; Revelation 2:13, 19; 13:10; 14:12.

# *The Salvation of All*

## **Selected Readings on Universal Reconciliation**

(Part 3)

*"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).*

### **THE JUSTICE OF ETERNAL SUFFERING**

What better is the world, what better is the sinner, what better is God, what better is the truth, that the sinner should suffer – continue suffering for all eternity? Would there be less sin in the universe? Would there be any making-up for sin? Would it show God justified in doing what He knew would bring sin into the world, justified in making creatures who He knew would sin? What setting-right would come of the sinner's suffering? ...

If my friend has wronged me, will it console me to see him punished? Will that be a rendering to me of my due? Will his agony be a balm to my deep wound? Should I be fit for any friendship if that were possible even in regard to my enemy? But would not the shadow of repentant grief, the light of reviving love on his countenance, heal it at once however deep?

Take any of those wicked people in Dante's hell, and ask wherein is justice served by their punishment. Mind, I am not saying it is not right to punish them; I am saying that justice is not, never can be, satisfied by suffering – nay, cannot have any satisfaction in or from suffering. Human resentment, human revenge, human hate may. Such justice as Dante's keeps wickedness alive in its most terrible forms ...

"God" is triumphantly defeated, I say, throughout the Hell of His vengeance. Although against evil, it is but the vain and wasted cruelty of a tyrant. There is no destruction of evil thereby, but an enhancing of its horrible power in the midst of the

most agonizing and disgusting tortures a divine imagination can invent. If sin must be kept alive, then hell must be kept alive; but while I regard the smallest sin as infinitely loathsome, I do not believe that any being, never good enough to see the essential ugliness of sin, could sin so as to deserve such punishment ...

God is bound by His justice to destroy *sin* in His creation. Love is justice – is the fulfilling of the law, for God as well as for His children ... He is bound in Himself to make up for wrong done by His children ... For nothing less than this did Christ die.

George MacDonald (1824-1905)  
*Unspoken Sermons, Series Three* (1889)

### **LOVE OVER ALL**

God will not conquer evil by crushing it underfoot – any god of man's idea could do that – but by conquest of heart over heart, of life over life, of life over death, of love over all.

Justice requires that sin should be put an end to.

George MacDonald (1824-1905)  
*Wisdom to Live By*

### **THE STORY OF GRACE STRONGER THAN SIN**

The notion of the popular creed, (*i.e.*, that God is in the Bible detailing the story of His own defeat, how sin has proved too strong for Him), seems wholly unfounded. Assuredly the Bible is not the

story of sin, deepening into eternal ruin, of God's Son, worsted in His utmost effort. *It is from the opening to the close the story of grace stronger than sin – of life victorious over every form of death – of God triumphant over evil.*"

Thomas Allin (1835-1908)  
*Christ Triumphant* (1890)

### **SPECIAL SALVATION**

It is often remarked by those who oppose the doctrine of universal salvation, that if God is the Savior of all men, then there is no difference between the saint and the sinner, the believer and unbeliever. Those who make this remark seem to forget, that while God is declared to be the Savior of all men, He is also said to be *especially* the Savior of the believer. Though it is true, that God is the Savior of all, yet a little more attention would teach you that all along, in Scripture, there is a salvation held forth as the *special property* of the *believer*, in which the unbeliever can have no part or lot. Though all shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, yet the believer *alone* can enjoy this special salvation.

Isaac Dowd Williamson (1807-1876)  
*The Nature of Salvation* (1840)

### **THE PURSUING LOVE OF GOD**

God will seek us – how long? Until He finds us. And when He's found the last little shriveling rebellious soul and has depopulated hell, then death will be swallowed up in victory, and Christ will turn over all things to the Father that He may be "*All and in all.*" Then every tongue shall "*confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Clarence Jordan (1912-1969)  
Author of the *Cotton Patch Version*, and the inspiration for Habitat for Humanity

### **WORTHY OF TRUST**

The great mass of Christians do not know God so as to trust Him, not only because they have

not *the truth* in regard to Him, but also because they believe many *lies* about Him. They are led astray by their "blind leaders." It is a wonder that Christians trust Him as much as they do, when by their horrid ideas of Him they make Him out to be anything but a God of love, worthy of trust.

Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925)  
*The Spirit of the Word* (1885)

### **HE WILL NOT BEGIN WHAT HE CANNOT COMPLETE**

"... *Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands*" (Job 14:15).

The Great Workman is interested in His work, He has a "desire" to it, and He will not begin what He cannot complete; for the creature to fail of the purpose of its creation implies a failure on the part of the Creator, and this cannot be in the government of God. "*My counsel shall stand,*" He says, "*and I will do all My pleasure*" (Isaiah 46:10). Hence we may be sure that the ultimate purpose in the creation of everyone, whatever it may be, will be surely carried out, as the Creator cannot fail, neither can His creations. Thus does it appear that in the final outcome of man's creation the honor of the Most High is involved, and He is bound to make that outcome a successful and glorious one in order to vindicate that honor.

Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925)  
*True Basis of Redemption* (1885)

### **THE CREATOR NEVER FAILS**

This is the point that I wish the reader especially to note; the final accomplishment of the purpose of God depends on Himself and not on man. The creature may fail, the Creator never fails; and no amount of blunders, mistakes, failures or perversions of the creature shall disarrange or thwart the plans of the Creator. This is our hope; this is the hope of the world; this is the *True Basis of Redemption*. Man is God's own work: He has begun to create Him in His own image and likeness; He will surely finish the work, for He will

have a desire to the work of His own hands.

Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925)  
*True Basis of Redemption* (1885)

### OUR FATHER'S ALLOTMENTS

The doctrine that God is our Father solves the problem of human life. It is a pledge that our infinite Friend ordains our representative allotments, however dark or sad they may seem to be; that our whole life, through all its stages and fortunes, its mingled web of events, incidents, and vicissitudes, its alternations of health and sickness, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, and even our sins and follies, will be made the means of everlasting progress on knowledge, virtue, and bliss.

Thomas Clapp (1792-1866)  
*Voices of the Faith* (1887)

### THE LOST

The word "lost" itself has a force in it in favor of the doctrine of universal grace and salvation. Men could not be lost if they did not belong to God. It would be impossible to lose a man who belonged nowhere. When, therefore, God speaks of sinners as being "lost," it shows they *belong* to Him. All men are lost while in a state of sin.

Thomas Whittemore (1800-1861)  
*Voices of the Faith* (1887)

### THE CRISES AND CYCLES OF GROWTH

The Christian life is a series of crises and cycles of growth ... Here we are disentangled and extricated from the old Adamic setup. Life becomes a series of Divinely-planned experiences in which God is faithfully working to release us and *adjust us to a life in Himself*.

John Wright Follette (1883-1966)  
*Arrows of Truth* (1969)

### FIRE

Fire does so many things – it cleanses, frees, reduces, refines.

John Wright Follette (1883-1966)  
*Arrows of Truth* (1969)

### PURPOSE OF THE FIRSTFRUITS

First, the purpose of God by the firstfruits or firstborn, is to save and bless the later-born ...

This glorious truth, though the very essence of the gospel, which announces salvation to the world through the promised seed of Abraham, is even yet so little seen by many of Abraham's seed, that not a few of the children of promise speak and act as if Christ and His Body only should be saved, instead of rejoicing that they are also the appointed means of saving others.

Even of the elect, few see that they are elect to the birthright, not to be blessed only, but to be a blessing; as firstborn with Christ to share in the glory of kingship and priesthood with Him, not only to rule and intercede for their younger and later-born brethren, but to avenge their blood, and to raise up seed to the dead, and in and through Christ, their Life and Head, to redeem their lost inheritance.

Thank God that if the elect know not their double portion, God knows and keeps it for them, and will in due time, in spite of their blindness, fulfill His purpose in and by them. Surely it is a reproach to the heirs, that they know not their Father's purpose, and that through not knowing it, they bear so imperfect a testimony as to His goodwill to all His fallen creatures.

Andrew Jukes (1815-1901)  
*The Restitution of all Things* (1867)  
pp 30, 33-34



# *The Question of Hitler*

## *Some of My Own Attitudes Towards the Example of Hitler that So Many Cite So Often*

by – Thomas Talbott  
(Author of *The Inescapable Love of God*)

**H**ow many of you believe that you are a more worthy candidate for salvation than Hitler was? Bear in mind that, unlike Hitler, none of us here have the power of a modern state at our disposal, so the amount of harm we can do is in that sense limited by the grace of God. If we get angry with someone in this forum, for example, we might say something nasty, but we are in no position to send the Gestapo after the person who offends us. Nor are we in a position, such as Hitler was, where our own weaknesses and prejudices can easily be transformed into political terror. The same weaknesses and prejudices may in fact be there, but we do not have available to us the same means of expressing them that Hitler had available to him.

“Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” said Lord Acton. But few of us have experienced even the temptations of political power, much less the temptations of “absolute” tyrannical power. So how many are utterly confident that in Hitler’s precise circumstances you would have come off any better than he did?

**First**, I strongly suspect that Hitler was in a far more hopeful condition at the end of his earthly life, after all of his evil plans and ambitions had come to ruin, than he was at any time previously ... Historians believe that Hitler committed suicide at the end, though no one really knows this for sure. But even if he did commit suicide, the very despair or sense of defeat that sometimes leads to suicide can just as easily lead to repentance and to a voluntary submission of one’s will to God. If I were to speculate, therefore, I would guess that Hitler, like the terrorist Saul of Tarsus, may have been far closer to the kingdom of God, even during his earthly life, than many professing Christians who continue to harbor hatreds, secret resentments,

and petty jealousies in their own hearts. For though Hitler’s hatred of the Jews was no less intense than Saul’s hatred of Christians, it was at least out in the open where it could be dealt with effectively.

**Second**, I have no confidence at all that in Hitler’s shoes I would have fared any better than he did ... I have a hard time imagining myself masterminding genocide ... I have a hard time seeing myself as an evil monster. But here I would make two observations.

(1) I was reared in one of the most loving families that you could possibly imagine. My mother constantly cultivated a sense of empathy in her children, constantly taught us to consider the other person’s feelings, constantly asked questions like, “How would you feel if ...” Had I been switched as a baby and placed in a very different home, perhaps that of a white racist family, or had I been exposed to various kinds of physical and sexual abuse as a child, or had I been exposed to the same forces that shaped Hitler’s personality, I have no confidence that I would have turned out any better than he did.

(2) Even as an adult with all the advantages I have had, I have done some pretty rotten and some pretty selfish things. So if I were suddenly thrust into truly terrifying circumstances – like armed combat, for example – or if I were required to live with a persistent fear for the safety of my family, or if I were to come to believe, however irrationally, that a group of people were a threat to our nation and to our very way of life, I see no reason why I might not gradually be seduced – these things usually come about gradually – into some truly monstrous acts ... I am capable of all sin, and only the grace of God has kept me from horrendous ones.

(see **QUESTION**, next page)

PRAYER (continued from page 1629)

## PRAYER THAT CANNOT BE UTTERED

The truth is, we can find true rest from our weaknesses, cares and weariness in quiet faith, living in recognition of His constant presence in our lives – a place of faith-rest in Him. It is our position and privilege to live simply, moment-by-moment, in His ever-abiding life, living as who He has made us “*in the Beloved.*” Then, even our most endearing “*intercession*” is only unspoken cries (unuttered groanings) coming out of our Father’s Spirit living and breathing within us.

*“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26).

With such provision from our Father, we can simply enjoy Him daily, as His dear children, “*accepted in the Beloved.*” We can simply *be still, and know that He is God* (Psalm 46:10). We can experience the reality of a faith-rest that knows God as Father – in *every* circumstance and in *every* situation.

*“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Romans 11:36).

QUESTION (continued from previous page)

**Third**, I have every confidence that the difference between Hitler and me is not a simple matter of my having made better free choices than he did. I believe in free will, but I also accept the Pauline assertion that our destiny “*is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” (Romans 9:16). We are guilty of self-righteousness if we start to think so-and-so (Hitler in this example) is worse off than we are in God’s eyes. Self-righteousness or spiritual pride is one of the most pernicious of all sins – which is why, I believe, that Jesus came down upon it so harshly. Put it together with a heavy dose of fear – such as fear of everlasting punishment – and you have a prescription for truly monstrous acts. Unfortunately, some of the greatest theologians in the Western tradition, men still widely revered as heroes of the faith, have in fact supported acts of terror that are every bit as evil as Hitler’s own actions were.

*“In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Ephesians 1:11).

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Then, and only then, can we truly realize the exhortation of Paul,

*“Pray without ceasing”* (I Thessalonians 5:17).

The traditional concept of prayer is flawed by a very narrow religious definition. It is identified by specific religious formulas, ceremonies, rites, rituals and duties. Instead, for the believer, “*prayer*” is simply the very life of God living out through our own spirit and being, in loving union with the Father by the “*the communion*” (II Corinthians 13:14) and “*supplication*” (Ephesians 6:18) of His Spirit, “*continuing instant in prayer*” (Romans 12:12).

Prayer is simply acknowledging, enjoying and living in the fellowship and communion of the Father’s ever-abiding presence; His very breath in our frail earthen vessels. Enjoy Him!



Why suppose that the weakness and fear that led Augustine to support the persecution of the Donatists, or the weakness and fear that led the religious leaders in Geneva to burn Servetus at the stake (over green wood so that it took three hours for him to be pronounced dead), or the weakness and fear that led the Calvinists in Zurich to drown Anabaptists in a sort of hideous parody of their belief in believer’s baptism – why suppose that any of this was essentially different from the weakness and fear that led Hitler into some of his own most monstrous acts? The only difference I can discern is that you can’t do as much damage with a sword and a Medieval torture chamber as you can with guns, airplanes and gas chambers.

I offer this not as an argument for anything, but merely as a description of some of my own attitudes and beliefs.

Willamette University (website, 2000) ■