



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume VII
Issue 175

Who Are You, and What Have You Done with My Real Father?

by – Aaron Locker

People can only fully and accurately understand what they are capable of relating to by experience. Without experience, one may be able to answer the question of how something happens, but true understanding is more firmly hinged upon **why** something happens. Experience brings understanding that classes, quizzes, tests and reading cannot. I may understand how Christ died for my sins by reading about it in the Bible; I may even grasp the fact that Christ's sacrifice was done out of love, but only after seeing and feeling His love and loving as He did do I understand **why** He died. Only after loving someone enough to sacrifice myself for them can I relate to even the smallest part of the love that God had for the world when He gave His Son for it. After experiencing the bond between a father and a son and after understanding that unconditional love which would cause me to continue to give my life for my father over and over again forever, I can finally begin to grasp how much I would have to love the world to will my only father's suffering and death to save the world. Theologians, scholars, priests, preachers and men of the cloth can talk about eternal conscious torment until they turn blue, but my answer to their depiction of a Father who would torture His children forever will always be "That's not my God!"

Yes, it is true. I proudly and loudly proclaim it. If the God Whom others worship has a nature which absolutely negates love, that God is not my God. The God I worship goes by the name "Love" and "Savior of all men." In today's version of Christianity, worshiping and sucking up to a god who finds pleasure in burning his children alive forever is the only way to get on his good side and spare one's own well-being. If my father told me to serve him faithfully and lovingly while he burned my sisters alive forever; my response

would not be "Hooray! Such good news!" Rather, it would be, "Who are you and what have you done with my **real** father?" So should be the response of every Christian when they hear the doctrine of eternal conscious torment.

The idea of all men receiving eternal life is thought to be heretical by partialists, but even partialists believe that all will have eternal life. They may not realize this because the idea of a man living in death is so ridiculously contradictory, but partialists believe that every man will have eternal life; only most of these will live eternally in a "place" called death. Partialists claim that the inhabitants of "the second death" are alive; and not just alive for a period of time until they die, but alive forever. The very thought of this may sound silly, but over a billion people on the planet right now hold more strongly to this teaching than they do to the teaching that two plus two equals four. Unfortunately for them, anyone who does not loudly proclaim "take my brain, just don't take my religion" is immediately labeled as a heretic by the chairmen of each and every organized religion on the planet. Partialists also claim to believe that the last enemy which will be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:26), however they deny this belief with the contradictory belief that "the second death" is never-ending.

(see **REAL**, page 1728)

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Dear Beloved Saints,

This Issue

In this issue we are carrying three great articles by Aaron Locker. What an encouragement this dear brother is to me! You have seen his material in the past, and rest assured you will see it in the future as well!

Also in this issue is another "My Story." I think you will enjoy Bob Evelyn's touching story – what a dear brother. I look forward to meeting him one day.

Superbowl

My team didn't win the Super Bowl. Maybe they would have a chance but they weren't even invited to play. We are long-time Washington Redskins fans. What other team is there, right? Or, so it is with die-hard fans.

Football is the only sport we follow in our house. And even though the "Skins" weren't playing, we watched the game, and ended up doing the next best thing: we rooted for the "hometown" team. You see, we're less than 100 miles from Three Rivers Stadium, so what else can we really do – they've become our "backup team." Not bad for a backup, either – 6 time Super Bowl champs – making them the winningest team in Super Bowl history: "Go Steelers!" Maybe next year: "Go Redskins!" (This is where the roar of the "Hogs" comes in.)

Groundhog Day

Six more weeks of winter, or an early spring?

Well, it looks like winter may be around a little longer this year, if you can trust the world's most famous groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, at Gobbler's Knob – a tradition since 1886. This is another PA "hometown" connection – Punxsutawney only being about 75 miles away. Phil's "prediction" might be about as good as the educated weather forecasters, but we'll see. I am sure that many of our readers are looking forward to spring, although I sure wouldn't mind six more weeks of winter myself.

Dialects of the Johnstown Area

Every area has its own unique cultural and regional dialects which prove to be very interesting. Virginia, where I spent my first 45 years, surely had its share of them. Maybe someday I will talk about them; but here I would like to list a few from our new home in the Johnstown area in the Laurel Highlands of PA.

I will list some words and customs that were completely foreign to me before moving here four years ago. I have found these very interesting, entertaining, and endearing. I do not know how "local" these actually are, and would be interested if any of our readers from other areas are familiar with these.

Cousint – your aunt and uncle's child

(see **EDITORIAL**, page 1729)

Bible Student's Notebook™

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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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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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"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken;' we also believe, and therefore speak" (II Corinthians 4:13).

The Salvation of All *What Led Me to This Belief?* by – Bob Evely

Bob Evely is a businessman with a national company, and specializes in sales, marketing and business development. He is a graduate of *Oakland University* (Rochester, Michigan) and also has a Master of Divinity Degree from *Asbury Theological Seminary* (Wilmore, Kentucky).



Bob was an ordained minister in the *United Methodist* and *Free Methodist* denominations. He served as pastor of the Canton and West Point United Methodist Churches in Salem, Indiana; and the Open Door Free Methodist Church in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Both were bi-vocational positions, with Bob supporting his family through his full time employment.

In 2002 Bob resigned his position as pastor, based on his study of God's Word. He had come to the understanding of the *salvation of all*. Bob wrote a book, *At the End of the Ages*,¹ for the purpose of explaining, point by point, how he came to this conclusion.

Here is a brief look at what led him to this belief.

I guess if I had to boil everything down to reply to the question, "What was it that clinched this truth for me?" I would say it was simply considering the possibility that the denomination and the seminary I had attached myself to might be wrong in some of their doctrines. This is one area where seminary was a big help. As I sat in several classes and heard professors make discrediting remarks about other seminaries (particularly *Dallas Theological Seminary*), it made me think ... "I guess the professors at *Dallas Theological* are saying the same things about us." This was an eye opener. I realized that all my life I was in a theological box ... told how to think about various doctrines, without having to really think for myself. When I thought that maybe *Dallas Theological Seminary* might be right and my own seminary wrong, it led me to the point

where I conceded it was possible that doctrines I had accepted my entire life could be wrong.

Once I reached this point and was open to teachings other than what I had previously accepted, I began to study ... read ... and think for myself.

I saw that Bible translations were problematic. I saw inconsistencies from one translation to another that led me to see there was a problem. It was at this point that I first began to question translations. I did not question the Word of God ... but only the various translations. I knew there were many different ones ... but I always thought them to be very close, with no significant differences that would impact doctrines. Yet I found this was not necessarily true ... and more importantly I came to see that a translation was generally also an interpretation. The translator came to his work with certain biases ... not purposefully tainting the translation, but translating with a bias without even realizing he was doing so.

When we look at the Bible and attempt to search back to the Hebrew and Greek ... trying to be consistent and as unbiased as possible ... we begin to see major issues.

EONIAN was the first and the biggest issue I encountered. I saw that this same Greek word was translated sometimes "*eternal*" and other times "*age-long*" (or something similar), and I saw the inconsistency of the translations. I began to see that if this word "*aion*" in its various forms was considered consistently, it should always be translated "*age long*" or "*eonian*," or something such as that. Therefore certain things Scripture said were "*endless*" really were not.

1. The book can be ordered through *StudyShelf.com*, or by calling 1-800-784-6010.

HELL was another word I studied ... and saw that ►

“*sheol*” and “*hades*” were also inconsistently handled. The translators would use “*hell*” if the context talked about the wicked ... but “*the grave*” (or something similar) if talking about the righteous. But again ... great inconsistency, and simply a matter of the translators trying to make sense of the passages in light of the doctrines they had accepted.

Then I began to see the many “*all*” passages, that in the past I had restricted because of the doctrines I had accepted. “*All*” could not mean all, or so I thought, since some were destined for hell. But not so, if the Scriptures are handled consistently.

Rightly dividing the Word was also something I never did ... and in my Methodist backgrounds never even heard of. Israel meant the church, Kingdom meant heaven, and so on.

[Then] I came to the point when I concluded, “What right do I have to take a passage talking directly to Israel, and to automatically claim it as my own.”

Along this line, I also never realized that Paul’s message was any different from Peter’s, or any of the others. Open the Bible to wherever you like and apply it ... that was what I thought was true. But I saw for the first time in Galatians that Paul did not receive his gospel from man, but from a direct revelation from Christ.

REAL (continued from page 1725)

So, why did God put us here? Is our existence the result of an accident that God didn’t see coming 6000 years ago, or is our existence and our experience in this life part of God’s plan? Scripture is clear about the fact that God had a plan before the foundation of the world, but was that plan foiled after Adam and Eve sinned? All these questions have one simple answer. Why are we here? God willed it so. Why are we going through this experience in our short life here? God willed it so. God’s plan was not foiled by sin. He was not surprised to see sin come into the equation. God is the potter, we are the clay and our life full of experiences here is the means by which God molds us. I am not saying that God is actively dragging each of us through certain experiences; I am saying that each person’s life consists of experiences caused by decisions and situations we face and that we are molded regardless of whether we choose sin or righteousness.

Take Paul’s experiences for example. Was Paul’s life affected by sin? Sure, he tempted and was tempted, he betrayed and was betrayed, he hated and was hated, he killed and was killed. Did Paul suffer? Absolutely. Did Paul have the opportunity not to walk with God? Yes. In the end, Paul chose righteousness instead of sin and he was molded by his experiences. Now consider Pharaoh’s life. Was Pharaoh’s life affected by sin? Sure,

Why would this be so important, unless what Paul had received was different, and new?

Then, finally, I appreciated I Corinthians 15 for the first time in all of its grandeur. This was the climax ... not the end of Revelation, but I Corinthians 15.

I can tell you that my time at seminary was a bit of a disappointment. In the 3-½ years of study, less than half of the classes involved Bible study ... many were on topics such as “the History of Worship” or “the History of the Church” or “Preaching Effectively.” All are valuable in the “religion business” but none in an understanding of the Bible. (By the way ... having studied church history *after* seminary is where I came to learn that *many* in the very early church believed in the *salvation of all*.)

The classes that did pertain to Bible study were more like “indoctrinations” than study. They used systematic theology textbooks or the sermons of John Wesley, and interpreted Scripture for me ... all, of course, from the Wesleyan perspective.

So I do not count my M. Div. degree from *Asbury Theological Seminary* as very valuable, even though *Asbury* is considered to be the “crown jewel” of seminaries by conservative, Bible-believing Methodists. ■

he tempted and was tempted, he betrayed and was betrayed, he hated and was hated, he killed and was killed. Did Pharaoh suffer? Absolutely. Did Pharaoh have the opportunity not to walk with God? Yes. In the end, Pharaoh chose sin instead of righteousness and he was molded by his experiences. In Pharaoh’s case, his heart was hardened by God to fulfill God’s plan (Exodus 7:13), and in Paul’s case, his heart was softened by God on the road to Damascus. Both of these men were not only molded directly by God, but molded indirectly by God through their experiences and contact with a sin-cursed world.

Will Paul be rewarded without end by God because God chose to soften Paul’s heart, but Pharaoh will be tormented without end by God because God chose to harden Pharaoh’s heart? Or can we submit the fact that God’s will is supreme over ours? Are our sin-cursed experiences here an accident by God – a result of God’s apparent lack of foresight – or were we put here by God on purpose after the counsel of His own will which Ephesians 1:11 depicts as a higher authority than man’s stubbornness? Will death someday be destroyed and life given to all who were dead (the only way to destroy death is with life)? Or will/can non-believers be dead and alive at the same time for all time? I subscribe to the belief that God will accomplish what He planned, even if the rest of the Christian world finds God’s will to be impractical and undoable. ■

To the Best of His Ability

by – Aaron Locker

When I was in high school, my principal did not measure the performance of one student against the performance of another. He knew that different people were good at different things. He would say, “I want you to do your school work to the best of your ability.” A student who was very capable in science but had trouble understanding math was never expected to perform in math the same as a student who was very capable in math. If a student worked to the best of their ability and got all B’s on their report card, they were congratulated for their hard work, not frowned upon because they didn’t get any A’s.

Working to the best of one’s ability is a concept that is rooted deeply into creation by the Creator. God would have us to work hard at things, not to be lazy. This concept is shown in Jesus’s “parable of the talents” in Matthew 25:15. The lord of the servants gave five talents to one servant, two talents to another servant and finally one talent to a third servant. The lord didn’t do this because he favored one servant over another, but, as verse 15 shows, he gave “to every man according to his several ability.” When the lord returned, the first two servants had performed to the best of their ability, but the third servant did not. The lord was displeased with the servant that did not perform to the best of his ability.

We have a God who is infinitely capable to do everything He pleases. While every Christian I have ever talked to would admit this, they refuse to believe that our God

would work to the best of His ability to accomplish what He wills. In fact, most Christians believe that while it is God’s will to see all men saved (I Timothy 2:4), and it is contrary to God’s will to see any perish (Matthew 18:15), that God will accomplish abundantly more against His will than He will accomplish for His will. If the almighty Creator of the universe will, in the end, be farther from His goal than He was in the beginning, as the Arminians teach, how foolish it would be for man, who can accomplish nothing without God, to put any energy at all into working after God’s will. If the all-powerful God will be exceedingly counterproductive in accomplishing His will, any attempt by man to accomplish God’s will can be nothing but pure evil.

I hope, in the future, to see more Christians embrace a God who works to the best of His infinite ability to accomplish the good pleasure of His will; and that when they hear a strange doctrine like that of eternal conscious torment which is entirely uncharacteristic of God, they will not hold fast to their belief of eternal conscious torment simply because it is what they, or their preacher, have always believed, but will discard their bias and search the Scripture to see what it says on the matter. Let it not be so important to ask, “Do you believe in God?” but to ask instead, “Who is the God in Whom you believe?” For if the nature of one’s God is anger, frustration and inability, I submit that it may be better to believe in no God at all than to worship a monster who makes Adolf Hitler look like a generous man.

EDITORIAL (continued from page 1726)

Gumband – a rubberband
Gutchies – your underwear
Relations – your relatives
Red-up – to clean up
Skin-over – to drive over
Yinz, Yunz – “You all”

While I’m at it I will share with you a few unique food terms and serving styles:

Chicken & Waffles – a waffle covered with chicken & gravy
Chipped Ham – very thinly sliced ham
French Fries – they are served covered with gravy, they also are served in your salad
Gobs – chocolate cake-like cookies with a creamy icing middle

Pigs in a blanket – stuffed cabbage (In Virginia “Pigs in a Blanket” is hotdogs cooked in a crescent roll).

This is not to mention the many dishes that I can’t even seem to remember their names, like haluski, halupki, and pagach.

Thanks for letting me ramble on with a little fun.

Your brother,
Until next week, my love to you,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Romans 5

A Passage Full Of Universal Affirmatives

by – Aaron Locker

A lot of Christians don't believe Romans 5:18-21. Of course, they won't come right out and say that, but it is true. Ask almost any Christian these two questions and their answers will contradict that passage:

1. How many people were affected by the fall and wound up under the bondage of sin?
2. How many people will be made righteous, receiving justification through God's free gift?

Christians will almost always answer "all" for the first question; but for the second question, almost every Christian will answer, "Only those who believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ." What this means is that almost every Christian rejects the idea that grace will abound more than sin did, that all men will come unto justification of life and that the same "many" who were made sinners through Adam will be made righteous through Christ.

I will address this passage in depth, starting with the logical conclusion of just Romans 5:19 when taken completely out of context, and finishing up with the conclusion of the entire passage.

First, let me share with you a little bit of logic terminology. A syllogism is a type of logical argument that infers a conclusion by two premises. There are certain terms for the different kinds of statements that are found in syllogisms. I will share the forms of statements and their names.

All A's are B's:

A Universal Affirmative Statement

No A's are B's:

A Universal Negative Statement

Some A's are B's:

A Particular Affirmative Statement

Some A's are not B's:

A Particular Negative Statement

The word "many" is a form of "some" in that it speaks of a large amount, but does not negate the possibility of all. We should note that particular affirmatives only work to prove their own validity and the invalidity of universal negatives, and do not address the truth or falsity of any of the other forms of statements.

More clearly; the affirmative types of statements never disprove the other affirmative. (The statement "all A's are B's" does not disprove that "some A's are B's" and the other way around.)

The negative types never disprove each other either. (The statement "no A's are B's" does not disprove that "some A's are not B's" and the other way around.)

The two universal statements work to disprove each other, however the two particular statements do not. (If all A's are B's, then the statement "No A's are B's" is untrue, however if some A's are B's; the statement "some A's are not B's" may still be true.)

The universal statements work to disprove the opposite particular and the other way around. (If

all A's are B's, then it is untrue that some A's are not B's and the other way around.)

Now on to the content.

Consider the following statement:

“Just as many X's are Y's, so many X's are Z's.”

Obviously this isn't a Bible verse, just a simple statement that I made to display a point. It is not important that any part of this statement be accepted or rejected by you as actual truth; but for the sake of the example, briefly assume that the statement is as true as it would be had it been found in the Bible.

In the first phrase we read the statement “many X's are Y's.” Stating that some X's are Y's does not negate the possibility that all X's are Y's; however we must keep in mind that this statement does *NOT* say nor imply “some X's are not Y's.” We must learn to take statements for exactly what they say and not for what we think they imply. The statement “Many X's are Y's” does not contradict the statement “All X's are Y's,” nor does it contradict the statement “some X's are not Y's”; it simply does not address the validity or invalidity of either one.

In the second phrase we read “many X's are Z's.” Again, this statement does not deal with the validity of the statements “all X's are Z's” or “some X's are not Z's.” Therefore, being a particular affirmative, the second phrase neither proves nor disproves universal affirmative statements or particular negative statements about the same subject.

Now, drawing as much truth as we have learned out of these statements we can confidently say the following:

No X's are Y's is untrue.

No X's are Z's is untrue.

Some X's are Y's is true.

Some X's are Z's is true.

Some X's are not Z's cannot be proved nor disproved.

All X's are Z's cannot be proved nor disproved.

All X's are Y's cannot be proved or disproved.

Some X's are not Y's cannot be proved or disproved.

What you have read thus far I have taught in order to make the understanding of Romans 5:19 easier. This verse is set up in the same form that we have just studied.

Romans 5:19

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

I have set up my example to be completely compatible with this verse. You may replace the letter “X” in my example with the word “people” as it is to be the understood subject of both phrases; you may replace the letter “Y” in my example with the word “sinners” and you may replace the letter “Z” in my example with the word “righteous.”

As you can tell by replacing the appropriate letters with the appropriate words in the conclusion of my example, taking this verse alone out of the Bible and teaching it as a message is a huge risk because of how much context you are ignoring and because of how much it fails to prove. Besides what we have already been told directly from the verse, we can only logically deduce by this one verse that it is untrue that nobody is a sinner, and it is untrue that nobody is made righteous. That's it! That alone should show the importance of not taking a verse out of context.



Fortunately though, we do have the context. We can read the verses around Romans 5:19 and easily come up with the universal affirmative that all men are made righteous. Yet when partialists are called to this passage; it is verse 19 that they proclaim as the proof that the context is a lie. Let's look at this verse in light of the context.

The first question that anyone might ask is "Why would Paul say 'all' one second and then say 'many' the very next?"

1. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,
2. so
3. by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Part 1:

Thanks to Romans 3:23, we know how many were made sinners. *ALL* have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As we know, a particular affirmative never negates the possibility for a universal affirmative to be true. In this case, Paul was talking about a large group of people. For some reason, some people believe that "all" people is not a large group and could absolutely not be referred to as "many" by any means.

On the contrary, if I made ten sandwiches for a picnic and took all ten with me, some people might say "Aaron took many sandwiches with him to the picnic." Clearly we know that I took all the sandwiches that I had made with me, but when taken out of context, the statement that I took "many" sandwiches could confuse some people who are uninformed about the number of sandwiches I made and took. The word "many" is purposed to address the enormity of the specific group. In this case, I took a huge number of sandwiches on the picnic, and that huge number was "all."

So in part one of this sentence, since we are blessed with the context, we must admit that the "many" people refers to "all" the people.

Part 2:

"So" is a word here that works to compare the two phrases. "So" means "in the same manner" and weighs the first against the second resulting in an even scale. (Note: The scale of sin to grace is shown in verses 20 and 21 to be eventually tipped in favor of grace by the amount of time that grace reigns as opposed to the short time that sin reigns, but verse 19 only deals with the measurement of the size of the group receiving sin to the size of the group receiving righteousness.)

Part 3:

Once again, we see the word "many" used when it has been said other times that "all" will be saved, not just those who believe. The "many" in this second phrase of the sentence is weighed against the "many" in the first phrase and is concluded to be the same group. In fact, the verse that you just read before this one insists that the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life because of Christ. So in one sentence we see Christ's death justify all men, but by the very next sentence we are debating whether or not that's true.

The passage is perfectly clear even without this "many" sentence that grace did much more abound than sin did. Sin abounded unto all until death, and grace abounds unto all forever. God's optimism is tough for some people to handle, but I accept it over man's pessimism. I Timothy 4:10 is also painful for some pessimists to read because it affirms the truth of Romans 5.

We see this same debate between Romans 5:12 and 5:15. Verse 12 says that death and sin passed upon all men, but then verse 15 refers to that same group of all as "many." It again notes that grace abounds *MUCH MORE* to that same group of many. Accepting this passage as truth is just a matter of believing that Christ's gracious act was stronger than Adam's sinful act. Was Christ's act weaker than Adam's? Was it a last ditch effort or was it an infinitely wise plan that was made by an infinitely wise God before the beginning of the world?

