



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

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Issue 180

Paul's Distinctive Revelation

Pinnacle of Progressive Revelation

by – S. Lee Homoki

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 Bible clearly states that there are divisions in Scripture which must be observed if we are ever going to acquire a proper interpretation of Scripture and if we are going to be unashamed workmen.

The fact that there are divisions in Scripture points to the reality of **progressive revelation**. Progressive revelation is the progressive unfolding of divine truth. Progressive revelation means that God added more and more meaning and grew new light and concepts of His plan and purpose as the ages of time advanced, in some cases superseding previously given revelation as a primary source of information.

An often overlooked division of Scripture and advance on truth is the **Pauline Revelation**, which the Apostle Paul called “my gospel.” The Apostle Paul received a revelation that is a **distinctive** advance on truth.

Let's investigate the truth of Paul's distinctive revelation.

Paul's gospel was received by special revelation (Acts 26:16-19; Ephesians 3:3) in the desert of Arabia (c.f. Galatians 1:12, 17, with 4:25). Please observe that both Moses and Christ had, no doubt, also been taught there (Exodus 19; Matthew 4:1; Luke 1:80).

Paul's gospel **had never** been revealed before to anyone but him (c.f. Romans 16:25; I Corinthians

9:17 with Galatians 3:23; Ephesians 3:5-9; Colossians 1:25-26; I Timothy 1:16). This is why it is referred to as “the Mystery” (Ephesians 3:3-4), and this is why Paul referred to it as “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8). Please observe in Ephesians 3:1-8 the numerous times the personal pronouns “I” and “me” are used. Paul had received this revelation personally from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12). He in turn revealed it to the “holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (c.f. Ephesians 3:5 with Galatians 2:2).

Paul's gospel was the new *dispensation of the grace of God* (I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 3:2; Colossians 1:25).

Paul's gospel makes **many** new advances on truth which **cannot** be found anywhere else in the Bible.

Some examples:

The church which is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30-32);

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Son of an Average Joe

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Is not this the carpenter's son? (Matthew 13:55).

The Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God; but the one who had the distinguished role of being His earthly "father" was Joseph. A simple man, and from all earthly perception what we might call an average "Joe," He was a lowly carpenter, making our Lord the "son of an average Joe."

This was not an accident, for it is indeed our Father's method. The Father does not plan and build spiritual life upon social prestige, honor, respect and position. He has made clear the divine method:

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called (I Corinthians 1:26).

Paul goes on to explain:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence (I Corinthians 1:27-29).

Our Lord Jesus Christ was seen as the son of Joseph, the carpenter – "the son of the average Joe;" but His life was the manifestation of His Heavenly Father! So it can be with us: though we were born mere human, and may have a lowly lot in life, inside of us dwells the very Life of the Father!

This is the great "mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (I Timothy 3:16).

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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)

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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DISTINCTIVE (continued from page 1765)

The believer's union with Christ and union with other believers in the Body (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1);

The baptism by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:18);

The heavenly standing of Body believers (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6);

The mystery of resurrection transformation (I Corinthians 15);

The mystery concerning the length of Israel's blindness (Romans 11:25);

The termination of spiritual gifts (c.f. I Corinthians 13:8 with Ephesians 4:11-12).

If you take the Pauline Epistles out of the Bible, then you are left without any church-age doctrine.

Paul is the first preacher of this gospel (I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11). The late William R. Newell, of the Moody Bible Institute, in his fine book *Paul versus Peter* makes the following comment on II Timothy 1:11:

The Greek word here is *kerux*, which means advance herald, that is, one that announces something new, ahead of others. (p. 23)

Paul's gospel was not an extension of *the gospel of the Kingdom*. The kingdom gospel is the "gospel of the circumcision," but Paul's gospel was the "gospel of the **uncircumcision**" (Galatians 2:7).

Paul did not receive his gospel from the Jerusalem (Twelve) Apostles or from anyone else (Galatians 1:11-12, 16-17).

Paul was not accountable to the Jerusalem (Twelve) Apostles (Galatians 2:2). Please note that when he went to Jerusalem, he went by revelation, not by command.

Paul taught the Jerusalem (Twelve) Apostles "that gospel" which he preached (Galatians 2:2). This would not have been necessary if his message had been identical with what the Jerusalem Apostles had

been preaching. They were not able to teach Paul (Galatians 2:6).

Paul's gospel superseded all other forms of the gospel (I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Galatians 1:8; Philippians 3:17; II Timothy 1:11-13; 2:2).

Paul's gospel has an inherent three-fold commission in it. Church-age believers are responsible to God: to evangelize the lost; the ministry of reconciliation (Acts 26:18; II Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 3:8); to be custodians of the Mystery (I Corinthians 4:1; Ephesians 3:9); and to glorify God (Ephesians 1:6; 3:9-11; Philippians 1:20). Paul was a faithful example of how this responsibility ought to be executed (Acts 26:19; II Timothy 4:7).

Paul's gospel was not endorsed at the beginning (II Timothy 4:16) and brought him much persecution (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3; I Timothy 1:8-12; II Timothy 3:10-4:2). Many kingdom believers could not understand salvation apart from the demands of the covenants and constantly "dogged" Paul's footsteps, insisting that he conform to this legal standard (Acts 15:1-2; Galatians 2:12-14).

Paul's gospel must be preached everywhere (II Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 6:19-10; Philippians 3:9, 17; Colossians 4:3; I Timothy 1:11, 16, 18; II Timothy 2:2; I Thessalonians 2:4; Titus 2:1, 15).

Failure or refusal to discern Paul's gospel as a separate and new revelation – not merely an extension of Israel's kingdom gospel – accounts for most of the confusion in people's minds as to just what the gospel is and just what is the normal Christian life.

William R. Newell, on page 6 of the above-mentioned book, makes the following fantastically pointed and important statement:

You can judge any man's preaching or teaching by this rule: Is he Pauline? Does his doctrine start and finish according to those statements of Christian doctrine uttered by the Apostle Paul?

No matter how wonderful a man may seem in his gifts and apparent consecration, if his gospel is not Pauline, it is not the gospel, and we might as well get our minds settled at once as to that.

The Divine Reckoning

Select Readings on *Identification in Christ* (Part 4)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

ADOPTION

Adoption is the act of God whereby children of God redeemed by Christ are made adult sons, whose full manifestations as such awaits the resurrection.

C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)
The Scofield Bible Correspondence Course (1907),
Vol. III, p. 412

ALL SINS FORGIVEN

No unforgiven soul sails with Paul: which is to say that Scripture recognizes no such person as a believer in Christ Jesus who has not already received forgiveness of all his sins.

In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

H.A. Ironside (1876-1951)
Sailing with Paul (1913), chapter 2

HEIRS OF THE DIVINE NATURE

The child inherits all the nature of its father: so we are heirs of the Divine nature; and no power can or will disinherit one of us. In this self-evident position I rest. Neither fear, nor doubt, nor creed can shake my trust.

L.M. Andrews (1836-?)
Voices of the Faith (1887)

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead ... Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (II Corinthians 1:9; 4:10).

"The sentence of death in ourselves" – That is the very basis of everything in real spiritual fruitfulness and effectiveness. Of course, here Paul is undoubtedly speaking in the first place about something very serious which had overtaken him; something which had come in the way of a terrible affliction, and he said he despaired of life and had the very sentence of death in himself so that there was no hope whatsoever for him from any human standpoint – there was no hope according to all human judgment and verdicts. He ought to have died – the very sentence of death was in him – and I do like the way he puts it. It is so richly significant: he uses just the little word *THAT*, which gives an entirely different complexion to the whole situation. He might have put it, "we had the sentence of death in ourselves *AND* we cannot trust in ourselves:" ...

But he did not put it that way. *"We had the sentence of death in ourselves THAT ..."* There is purpose in it – there is an object in it – there is something in it as a basic and fundamental principle. He realized that it was not the end but the beginning, with a design that we should not trust in ourselves but in God

who raises the dead, so that the sentence of death was not the end but the beginning of everything. There was a real purpose in this thing.

This has become the foundational principle of all Divine activities and operations: the sentence of death passed upon and registered in us and working out in us, and all the time another thing doing the work of God, triumphing over this sentence of death in us – this other thing which is in us, working through us, giving us ascendancy over death in Christ – so that the wonderful things of God are manifest by us when there is no accountableness for them in us. The Lord has swept away with one stroke the whole basis of our trust in ourselves – not to destroy us, not to make everything impossible – but THAT He who raises the dead might show the mighty works of this Resurrection Life which is fruitful in us.

Have you noticed that even Herod, "that old fox," when it was reported to him that the Lord Jesus was doing His many mighty works, said, "This is John the Baptist, risen from the dead; THEREFORE these mighty works are shown"? Risen from the dead = mighty works! How he got that inkling I don't know, but there is this principle in it, that resurrection from the dead implies mighty works – works mightier than those before death.

This is the principle all the way through the Word, that on the ground of a Life wrought in us through the cross by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is able to achieve and accomplish His supreme purpose. Yet in order to do it, the sentence of death must be planted right at the center, so that where we despair of life in ourselves – we know we cannot of ourselves accomplish anything – there is the mighty Life of God for everything: this that is "Christ in you," the Life of God, the hope of glory.

Now that immediately defines and delimits the measure of spiritual effectiveness. It is the measure of His Life coming through by the sentence of death being in ourselves. In all opposition, adversity, trial, affliction, Paul sees a great advantage for the Life of God – that this "death" is a great advantage for the Life of God – that this "death" is complementary really to the purpose of God

– that it is aiding the purpose of God. Paul always looked upon things in that way. He saw that those things which might be reckoned impossible of fruitfulness to God were essential to make that fruitfulness possible.

We are finding that old forms and institutions and organizations cannot meet the more direct encounter with the enemy. We are being forced to recognize the need for something more, and that something more is simply the naked Life of God as manifest in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ coming into tremendous contact with the whole system of death and of darkness.

We must be content to have our fruitfulness and spiritual value registered in the unseen – and not be dominated by the scales of values as set by men on the earth. God only works now on resurrection ground – by Resurrection Life – and this life in us is the basis of the Spirit's operation:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)
A Witness and a Testimony (July, 1927)

YOUR INDEPENDENT SELF IS FINISHED

Your independent self is finished on the Cross of Jesus. The same as your sins are finished in the blood of Jesus, your [old, former] self also was finished ...

So I lean back on an accomplished fact. I reckon on the fact of my co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with my Lord Jesus Christ ...

My union with Him in death and resurrection is an eternal, an essential, a substantial fact. That is what must be imparted to us. So we have had revealed to us from God's Word that this is the heart meaning of the substitutionary work of Christ – that because He was merely my substitute in infinite grace, it is really I that did the dying there – because there was no need for Him to do the dying. I did it. He did it in my place, so in God's sight, I did it.



I think one thing needs stressing there and that is the grasping of the realization that it is an accomplished fact and not something to be accomplished. There are thousands of hungry Christians who are trying to be crucified, and wishing they were crucified. No, no, no. You were crucified. You have been crucified! It is a fact concerning every believer. That's most important.

Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)
The Obedience of Faith (1954)

GOD WORKING

Since it is God working in the believer (Philippians 2:13), for any believer to say that he is failing or has failed is to say that God is failing or has failed, or in short, to say that God is a failure. What believer would talk to God and dare state such an accusation against his loving Father?

Andre Sneidar
Daily Email Goodies

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

There is one passage of Scripture that may occur to the reader that perhaps I ought to notice in this connection; it is Philippians 2:12, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*" To many this passage seems to make one's salvation depend entirely upon his own efforts; he is to work out his own salvation, *i.e.*, he is to save himself by his own works.

But of course it *cannot* mean this, for if it did it would contradict other Scripture which expressly declares that we are not saved by works but by faith – "*without works.*" What then does it mean? Read the next verse. "*For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*" There you have it again – "*All things are of God.*"

When God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, what part is there left for the individual to do? The willing and the doing is about the whole of it, is it not? And if God working in you does both the willing and the doing according to His good pleasure, then there is not much room for the good works of self; it is as the apostle says,

"I labored more than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me." Thus even this text teaches the same doctrine that we have learned from so many others: our salvation is of God.

This is the consummation of creation, and the work of the Creator, just as much as it was "*in the beginning.*" Then what shall we do with the other verse, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?*" Why, the meaning of this is plain enough – work out what the Lord works in; that is all there is to it. God is working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure; now you work that out; let the life inwrought of God be manifested outwardly ... You can only work out what God works in; you cannot work for your salvation, or secure salvation by working; but the salvation (*i.e.*, the life), that God imparts, we may manifest, and that is what the text enjoins that we should do.

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

THE REPRODUCTION OF CHRIST'S LIFE IN US

God now seeks to manifest Himself in and through His people. This is His final purpose now in the process of development. We are made partakers of the Divine nature and are to show forth the character of Christ ...

We are not so foolish as to think that such a transformation could be experimentally realized at once. The Lord uses the whole Christian lifetime to accomplish this. The revelation of Christ and the glorious possibilities of the Christian life may flash across the heart in one moment of time, but the outworking of that will take many a day.

What was His rule or method of revelation in the Word? Was it not,

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:10)?

So you think He has a new rule for this revelation? No, it is lesson upon lesson, trial upon trial,

blessing upon blessing, and thus through manifold operations ... until the image of the Son of God shines forth in grace and beauty ... Learning implies time, application and perseverance.

Listen to Paul:

*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have **learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content (Philippians 4:11).*

This came not by sudden revelation, neither was it a gift bestowed upon him. He passed through numbers of hard places before he reached this place of grace ...

We all desire to be like Christ in every department of our nature. We long that a fuller manifestation of His heavenly character might find expression through us. Then let us *learn* by the rule He has given us:

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.

Do you remember your early schools days? To how many did the ability to read come as a special gift or revelation? Did we not all have to learn our ABC's? Then we moved on from words of one syllable through lesson and book to the last reader. Our teachers may have loved us dearly and may have devoted hours of attention to our needs, but that alone could not make us readers. We had to learn personally by application and patient study. The teacher's love could not impart ability.

Do you think it is otherwise in the spiritual life? God's love, even though it cannot be measured, cannot in one moment transform us into full grown sons, neither can He put a babe in Christ upon a throne to reign – even though He loves us tenderly. The babe must grow, develop, and let the Holy Spirit give him the needed training required to make possible such a position. His purpose now is to transform us and to make this revelation of Christ in us.

Do we need to learn patience, love, obedience

or humility? Then let us yield to His order and working, and again to this sin-sick, weary, worn, dying world there will be made a fresh revelation of God even in His people.

John Wright Follette
Arrows of Truth (Cited in The Blazed Trail)

GRACE IS BIGGER THAN YOUR SINS!

David committed a horrible sin when he slept with Bathsheba, but after they were married and God wanted the temple to be rebuilt it was her son, Solomon, that He used to accomplish that project.

Peter flatly denied that he even knew Jesus, but when it came time for the sermon to be preached on the day of Pentecost, he was the man whom God used that day.

Abraham had his wife Sarah tell a king that she was his sister so that the king wouldn't kill him to have a chance to take her. Despite his horrible and cowardly sin, God reaffirmed His intention to make him the father of a great nation many times afterwards.

The list could go on and on. It's a strange thing to hear debate in the church today about who God can and can't use. The fact is that God can use anybody He wants to use ...

God can use you, too. Don't make the mistake of thinking that you might have done something that is so terrible that your Father can't redeem your past and use your life for His glory. He can use you, and He will use you.

Jesus came to put away your sin and He fully succeeded at that (see Hebrews 9:26). We need to stop worshipping our sins by focusing on them and glory in the finished work of the cross. God's grace is bigger than our sins and He will use our lives for His glory. Let's just trust Him to do it!

Steve McVey
GraceVine, September 2007

Coping with Ourselves

by – Aaron Locker

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts ... and be ye thankful (Colossians 3:15).

People tend to find difficulty in coping with who they are. Often they mask who they really are with a curtain of perceived or “ideal” nature. Some call this political correctness, but it goes much deeper than politics. Each one of us is born naked, bloody and crying; but as we grow older we do our best to conceal our nakedness (both figurative and literal), our bleeding (both figurative and literal) and our crying (both figurative and literal). Why do we do this? I believe it is because in our moments of nakedness, bleeding and tears that our true self shows, and being uncomfortable with ourselves we avoid these moments of transparency and vulnerability at all costs.

As it has been said so often, “life is the path, not the destination.” The beauties of traveling this path all deal with growth in some way. The collection of experience, knowledge, memories and diverse tastes are blessings to each of us. One specific blessing that is visible in the eyes of those who have received it (though few they are) is the blessing of learning to cope with who we are as individuals. The peace that comes with finding our identity and finding comfort in it is a peace that many people discover only as they draw their last few breaths.

My friend has found this blessing early in his life and you can see it so clearly in his eyes. He is at peace with everyone and everything around him. His wife, his children, his grandchildren and his close friends all feel the peace and comfort that radiates from him. He does not fear the transparency and vulnerability of nakedness, bleeding and tears; he counts them as blessings. When you are around someone who is at peace with himself and with the Lord, you know it and you cannot help but enjoy it. You indulge in it. This friend of mine has told me one of the secrets of coping with who I am, because it’s something I struggle with sometimes.

This secret is to learn to forgive yourself and stop living in past failures.

He and I both realize what an unspeakable blessing it is to be forgiven by our heavenly Father, but there is an obstacle that my friend has learned to get over which I have not. God has forgiven me for the monster I was in the past; why can’t I? When I apologized to the people I have sinned against in the past; fortunately every single one has said “I forgive you.” Some even laughed and said, “What do you mean? I have forgotten all about that.”

It seems that is easier for us to forgive others than it is for us to forgive ourselves, but we must. There can be no peace of mind inside a mind at war with itself. This is the part of “coping with myself” that I struggle with the most. I have not yet forgiven myself for some things in my past, but each day that I travel this path I grow towards that goal. There are some things that I thought I’d never forgive myself for which I have come to terms with. None of these things have I forgiven on my own. It is Christ’s example that helps me with forgiveness each day.

Being comfortable with who God made us is something we must all learn to accomplish if we wish to find peace within ourselves. It is an active task which is certainly not easy, but it pays big dividends to yourself and everyone around you. Learn to forgive yourself for the things of the past that haunt your mind. If God has declared you righteous and has thrown away your sins, you have peace with Him. You must also throw away your sins that have passed if you wish to gain peace within yourself. Only then can you see the blessing in being transparent and vulnerable around your loved ones instead of hiding behind the walls of a fortress built with fear and sadness.

