



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume VIII  
Issue 182

## *Complete in Christ*

by – William B. Hallman (1955)

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:8-10).*

**T**he greatest discovery that any human being can make is the discovery of the *ALL SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST*, and the utter worthlessness of man without Him. Christ is all, and in Him we have all. Without Him we are nothing, absolutely nothing.

“**Christ is all**” is the covering principle of this Book of Colossians. Look at the following verses:

*That in all things He might have the preeminence (1:18).*

*In Him should all fullness dwell (1:19).*

*In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).*

*In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (2:9).*

*In Him, which is the Head of all principality and power (2:10).*

*Christ is All, and in all (3:11).*

It was Bishop Moule who said, “No surer test according to Scripture can be applied to anything claiming to be Christian teaching. Where does it put Jesus Christ? What does it make of Jesus Christ? Is He something in it, or is He *ALL*?”

When anyone says that we are to be saved or kept by the Law, they have never understood the phrase, “*Complete in Him*.”

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4).*

When any one suggests that we can add to our salvation by doing something, they never understood the phrase, “*Complete in Him*.”

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

When anyone suggests that water baptism in any form is necessary for salvation, or as a testimony to one’s faith, or the “door” to the church, they do not understand the phrase “*Complete in Him*.”

*For we are “buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12).*

When we are told that we must keep the Sabbath, we know men do not understand the *completeness* we have in Christ.

*... The sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body is of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).*

“*Complete in Him*” – Nothing can go beyond completeness. You can add nothing to it. ►

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You might well try to purge a sunbeam, or purify the whiteness of the newly fallen snow as to add to what is already perfect. It is not only true that “*all fullness dwells in Him*,” but also that we are “*complete in Him*.”

It is the privilege of every person to recognize their completeness in Christ. This can be done first by,

## RECOGNIZING CHRIST’S FULLNESS

*For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily* (Colossians 2:9).

*Christ’s fullness* is resident in His person (“*in Him*”). This phrase is given the emphatic position in the verse, and draws our attention *first* to the One Who has the fullness.

### Permanence

We must also recognize the *permanence* of the fullness in the word “*dwelleth*.” This means “to settle down, to be at home.” Deity is at home in Christ, and dwells so in a permanent way.

### Plentitude

There is also the *plentitude* of this fullness as seen in the words, “*all the fullness of the Godhead*.” To make this matter exceedingly clear, the Apostle uses “*all*,” emphasizing that the fullness is *complete*.

*Christ Is the HEAD of All Creation*

*Who is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature* (Colossians 1:15ff).

In creation Christ is preeminent.

All creation was in Him ... In Him God created all else, for the whole universe was created in Him. This includes the celestial as well as the terrestrial spheres and every form of spiritual power and dignity. These exist through Him and for Him and He makes all a unit for the accomplishment of God’s purpose.<sup>1</sup>

*Christ is the HEAD of All Redemption*

*And having made peace through the blood of*

1. Added comments from A.E. Knoch, Concordant Commentary on the New Testament. p. 303

## **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)

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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*His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself (Colossians 1:20).*

When He cried, “*It is finished,*” it was finished. Nothing was left undone, and nothing needed to be added. In His death He became our means of peace and provision for every spiritual blessing; in His resurrection He became our power over death and the grave; in His ascension and seating at God’s right hand He became our guarantee of all future glory with Him. Nothing has been left undone for our future glorification with Him “*in heavenly places.*”

*Christ Is the HEAD of the Church, His Body*

*And He is the Head of the Body, the church (Colossians 1:18).*

The head is the glory of the Body. There the chief beauty of manhood dwells. Christ is fairer than all. We are circumcised with Him, baptized with Him, raised with Him, ascended with Him, and seated with Him in glory. What a complete identification!

*Christ Is Again the HEAD of Our Hope*

*When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).*

So our Lord Jesus Christ is *ALL* and *in ALL*. We are God’s heavenly people; our citizenship is in Heaven, and from thence we look for our Savior.

*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).*

**The Fullness of Christ** is but half of the story: the apostle hastens on to show the other side. So we must also

### **RECOGNIZE THE CHRISTIAN’S FULLNESS**

*Ye are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10).*

Note our present possession in the words “*ye are.*” “*In Him*” is the richest little phrase in all of Paul’s Epistles. It is the sphere of the believer’s life. If we are “*complete in Him,*” and we are “*saved by grace through faith,*” then it follows as Paul sets forth in this Epistle:

*We Are Complete Without Philosophy*

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Colossians 2:8).*

We need no sophisms of this world to prop our faith. There is nothing new in philosophy except old error. One day three friend philosophers came to Job to comfort him and to “set him straight” as to his thinking. These three represent the reasoning of the best of men.

Eliphaz reasoned on **human experience**:

*Even as I have seen ... I have seen (Job 4:8; 5:3; 15:17).*

Bildad comes from **human tradition**:

*For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age ... Search of the fathers (Job 8:8, 10).*

Zophar reasons on **human merit**:

*If thou prepare thine heart (Job 11:13-14).*

This is the gospel of humanism. Six thousand years of human groping after wisdom have not given men the true knowledge of God, nor His ways with man. Man’s reasoning is inadequate to understand either the will or way of God. If man by his own reason could find God and His way of redemption, then there would be no need of a revelation. Like little David we are content with the sling and the stones. As for the armor of philosophy, we leave that to proud Goliath to wear. “*Spoil you,*” says Paul, means “to carry off as a captive, a slave, as booty.”

*We Are Complete Without Ceremonies*

*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days (Colossians 2:14, 16-17).*

All these ceremonies had their day. They belong to the time of shadows; we now have the Substance, Christ. Finished are the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. Circumcision, sacrifices, Passover, water baptisms, temple services, priestly functions, (see **COMPLETE**, page 1787)

# Paul and His Companions

## Barnabas: The Son of Consolation

by – John D. LaVier (1906-2005)

*A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith (Acts 11:24).*

We begin this look at Paul's companions with Barnabas, and this choice is obvious, for he was one of the first to be identified with Paul after his conversion. However, there were two others, prior to Barnabas, who showed kindness to Paul and ministered to him. They were Judas and Ananias. These names remind us of the betrayer of Christ and of the one who lied to the Holy Ghost, but these two were not like their infamous namesakes. After his experience on the Damascus road, Saul (we will henceforth use the name Paul) spent three days in the house of Judas, and under such shock that he could neither eat nor drink. In addition to the emotional experience was the realization that all his righteousness, the result of law-keeping and religious zeal was nothing but refuse to be cast on the scrap pile. How this must have crushed him. It was then that Ananias, sent of the Lord, came to recover him of his sight and to inform him of his commission to bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles, as well as to kings and the children of Israel. Think of these dear saints, Judas and Ananias, whose names were perhaps on the warrants held by Saul to bring about their arrest and imprisonment. He was their enemy and yet they showed the love of Christ as they ministered to his need.

Having his eyes opened, spiritually as well as physically, Paul wasted no time. There in Damascus, where he had come to seek out the disciples, he began straightway to preach Christ in the synagogue. He no doubt told them that he had seen Jesus of Nazareth, and that He was alive from the dead and was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. This ministry was very brief, for he writes in Galatians 1:16-17, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood... but I went into Arabia." He



was there, not for three years as commonly thought, but for a much shorter period of time. He was there for a conference, not with man, but with the Lord Himself. It was there he received the message he was to bear to the Gentiles. Paul wrote concerning the gospel he preached, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). He also referred to this when he wrote of "the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

In passing, it should be noted that Paul did not receive the entire body of truth for this dispensation at the meeting in Arabia. He wrote of the "abundance of the revelations" (II Corinthians 12:7) that were later given to him. He was also caught up into the third heaven where he heard unspeakable words, of which it was not lawful (at that time) for him to utter. During the transition, as Israel is fading out of the picture, the light begins to shine clearer and brighter. With the solemn pronouncement of Acts 28:28 the transition ends and Israel is entirely off the scene. In the letters thereafter written, the prison epistles, we have the CAPSTONE of all truth. In them is revealed the heavenly calling and glorious destiny of the Church, the Body of Christ. In them the last vestiges of the old order are gone, and in them is revealed the normal program for God's people in this dispensation of His grace. Not the beginning of a new Body, but most certainly a new program for the Body.

After the time in Arabia Paul returned to Damascus where "he increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this [Jesus] is very Christ" (Acts 9:22). This strong preaching so aroused and infuriated

the Jews that they determined to kill him. They set guards at all the gates to prevent his escape from the city, but the believers let him down by the wall in a basket. What a humiliating experience. The proud, arrogant Pharisee who had come to the city breathing out threatenings and slaughter now leaves it huddled in a basket in the dark of night. In the eleventh chapter of II Corinthians, where he gives a record of his sufferings, he concludes with a reference to this, as though it was the most degrading experience of all. Following this escape he went back to Jerusalem.

Arriving in Jerusalem Paul desired to join with the other believers. However, they were suspicious of him, not believing that he was a true disciple, but only seeking to infiltrate their ranks to bring about further persecution. It is here that Barnabas enters the picture, for we read, *“But Barnabas took him”* (Acts 9:27). Yes, Barnabas took him to the apostles and the others and told them how Paul had seen the Lord, had been truly converted, and had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Barnabas was a man who was interested in others and always looking for the opportunity to befriend them in their time of need. He is first mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts. In the Kingdom church at Jerusalem there was a Christian commune, a prototype of Israel's future, and those who had property sold it, brought the proceeds to the apostles, and distribution was made to those in need. Then we read, *“And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet”* (Acts 4:36-37). Why Barnabas' gift is singled out we do not know. It may be it was rather large, or it may be because of the spirit in which it was given. It was because of this character, always seeking to meet the needs of others, that he was given a new name: *“The son of consolation.”* What a beautiful name. It indicates his generous spirit, his heart of love and concern, his hand always reaching out to help. He was truly Mr. Greatheart.

Now Barnabas' generous spirit goes out to Paul. He sees Paul desiring and needing fellowship, and

being denied, and he does something about it. He takes Paul in hand, speaks up on his behalf, and such was the trust and confidence all had in Barnabas that they listened to him and Paul was accepted. Almost immediately Paul begins to boldly preach Christ, which again stirred up the enemies of the truth and they went about to slay him. When their murderous plans were known, the brethren, perhaps led by friend Barnabas, escorted Paul to Caesarea on the seacoast where he sailed for Tarsus, his birthplace. He no doubt went the more willingly because the Lord had appeared to him in the temple telling him to get out of Jerusalem, and reminding him that his mission was to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21).

Paul's stay in Tarsus is nearly a blank to us, and it probably lasted six or seven years. It is certain he was not idle, for he was not that sort of person. It was perhaps during this time that he won his kinsmen to Christ, those mentioned in Romans 16, including the sister whose son later saved his life. He may also have founded the churches in Cilicia referred to in Acts 15:41.

Meanwhile, some of those scattered abroad by the persecution following Stephen's death had gotten as far as Antioch. There they preached the word and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. News of this reached Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to investigate. The Scripture says, *“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith”* (Acts 11:24). When Barnabas arrived at Antioch and saw the grace of God in action, with souls being saved and the Word working in the hearts of these Greeks, he was glad. This shows how bighearted he was. Some are so small-hearted that when they hear of the Lord blessing others, instead of being glad they are mad. Not so with friend Barnabas, he was glad. Here we see the son of consolation becoming the son of exhortation. Having taken their stand for Christ he exhorted them not to falter. He perhaps told them how others were suffering at Jerusalem, and they could expect to suffer, but they were not to waver, but with purpose of heart they were to cleave unto the Lord. We need this exhortation also, for if we are going to be a companion of Paul we can expect to suffer too. There have been those who have taken a stand for the Lord and for Pauline ►

truth; they have started off well and then when a bit of opposition comes, or they see what it may cost, they wilt, throw in the towel and fade off the scene. We need to *"be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."* He will give fortitude and courage, that with purpose of heart we will cleave unto Him.

When Barnabas saw the importance of the work at Antioch, and many Greeks believing and desiring to hear the Word, he thought of Paul and of Paul's commission to go to the Gentiles. Here again we see the noble character of Barnabas. He did not think of himself. If he had been like some today he would have erected a Barnabas Tabernacle and built the work around himself; but unselfish soul that he was, off he goes to fetch Paul from Tarsus, bringing him to Antioch, where for a year they were laborers together teaching much people. It was Barnabas who got Paul started on his great life work. It was here at Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians."

Being commissioned and directed by the Holy Spirit these two companions, Barnabas and Paul, leave Antioch on this first great missionary journey. They went to the port city of Seleucia, where they boarded a ship bound for Cyprus. Compared to this voyage and its results the voyages of Columbus, Magellan and others count for little, for this voyage marked the beginning of the sending forth of God's message of grace to all the world. At the conclusion of this missionary tour Paul summed it up by rehearsing all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. It is important to note here that it was through Paul that God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. The door of faith was not opened to the Gentiles on the day of Pentecost with Peter using the keys of the kingdom and calling upon Israel to repent. The Church of this dispensation is a joint body composed of Jew and Gentile; there surely was no joint body on the day of Pentecost.

The labors of these two faithful servants of God, Paul and Barnabas, was marked by glorious triumphs of the gospel, but marked by trials and tests as well. They were run out of Antioch in Pisidia, had to flee from Iconium where there were

plans to kill them, and at Lystra Paul was stoned and left for dead, but God raised him up. Then these two showed their mettle by retracing their steps, visiting the same cities where they had been persecuted, confirming and establishing the saints and exhorting them to continue in the faith in spite of suffering. Through all of these experiences Barnabas stood shoulder to shoulder with Paul as a trustworthy companion and loyal friend.

After their rigorous travels and return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to the council at Jerusalem which had been convened to settle the matter of the Gentiles' relationship to the law. There they both reported what great things God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. James was the recognized leader at Jerusalem and his sentence was that the Gentiles were not to be troubled with the old Jewish laws. Paul and Barnabas carried this opinion back to the church at Antioch, where they continued teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord. Some time later Paul suggested that the two of them revisit all the cities where they had formerly been to see how the believers were faring. Barnabas was willing, but was determined to take with them his nephew Mark. Paul was opposed to this, as Mark had started out with them on their first journey but for some reason, along the way, had deserted them. It is hard to say who was right or wrong in this dispute, for we can understand the feelings of both. Barnabas knew his nephew better than Paul, saw real potential in him, and felt he was worthy of another chance (which was the nature of the Son of Consolation). On the other hand, Paul felt the work of the Lord demanded the very best and since they were returning to the lion's den and things might get rough they needed one who was thoroughly dependable. It is sad but true that even today the work of the Lord suffers because there are those in the churches who have a position or hold an office for which they are ill-suited and unreliable, and yet through timidity on the part of the oversight are not replaced. At any rate, the contention between Paul and Barnabas was so great that each decided to go their own way.

It would seem the real reason for the separation was something that had preceded this and which still rankled both of them. Now, good man that

he was, we must take note of one time in which Barnabas failed. While they were at Antioch Peter had come for a visit, and freely fellowshiped and ate with the Gentile believers, as he had every right to do. Then he saw “*certain come from James.*” These were Jews from Jerusalem and it was evident the decision of the council had not removed the resentment and jealousy they had for the Gentiles. When Peter saw these he was afraid they would carry the report back that he was eating with the Gentiles, and so he separated himself and had nothing more to do with them, and the most surprising thing of all was that Barnabas dissembled likewise and followed Peter in this action.

What was Paul’s reaction to this behavior on the part of Peter and Barnabas? If he was like some of those today he would have said, “Now we don’t want any controversy, so let them just go their way and we will go ours.” Yet such words never fell from the lips of this faithful warrior. Where truth was at stake he was ever ready to take up the sword and fight in defense of it. Filled with a holy zeal for the truth he withstood Peter and Barnabas to the face, and publicly rebuked them, for they were to be blamed. One need not go around looking for controversy, but to remain silent when the truth of God’s Word is involved is plain cowardice. It is through the courage of those like Paul that the truth is preserved. Dr. McCartney has beautifully

written concerning this incident:

His heroism reached a high-water mark when he stood up in the assembly in the church at Antioch and rebuked Peter and Barnabas for disloyalty to their own convictions and disloyalty to the freedom of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Though Barnabas and Paul were estranged for a brief season we are sure their mutual affection did not cease. There was reconciliation. Paul later identifies himself with this good companion and speaks of “*I only and Barnabas,*” He also wrote to Timothy and said, “*Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*” And even Peter wrote concerning “*our beloved brother Paul.*”

Here we take leave of friend and companion Barnabas. He was a loyal, loving, unselfish companion to have. He truly exemplified the Scripture which says, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*” (Philippians 2:4). May we profit by his acquaintance.

Indianapolis, IN  
*Yokefellows: Paul and His Companions*

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**COMPLETE** (continued from page 1783)

etc., are but “*weak and beggarly elements*” of a past age, encumbrances no longer needed. Yet man is prone to be religious, and add something to Christ. He must “*touch,*” “*taste*” and “*handle*” something (Colossians 2:21).

Again, we are “**complete in Him**” without any human merit.

*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).*

*All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).*

If we were “*dead in sins,*” and we were, how could a dead man do anything? He cannot see, hear, touch, smell, speak or walk. So how utterly foolish it is like Zophar to talk about preparing one’s heart to appease God or to merit His favor.

Therefore, if “*in Him*” there dwells “*all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,*” and we are “*complete in Him,*” let us live as those who know this fullness! The Pauline doctrine of Christ is His absolute fullness. Christ should therefore command all our admiration, our love. There is at our disposal the infinite merit of His righteousness, the infinite efficacy in His blood, and the infinite power of His resurrection and glorification.

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## Our Mailbag

“Be Not Afraid,” helps me on a daily basis. I believe Christ is with us in the small things in our life as well as the large things ... We need to open to the graces Christ is trying to shower on us every day. – **Blog**

This wonderful TRUE gospel of Jesus Christ is more glorious than the first one that set my husband and I free from a very legalistic church some 25 years ago. I am hungry to learn all I can about Gods being “ALL in ALL” ... I thank God for you and the ministry of words you have been blessed with, sharing with those of us who are craving more and more knowledge of His Fullness. I will sign up for your weekly newsletter on-line ...

Sometimes we just wish we could “know all” right now. What a mercy is His Sovereignty as to the what, when and how He teaches us about His awesome glory and grace! – **CA**

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