



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume VIII
Issue 189

Failure

by – Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help (Hosea 13:9).

*Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, "Return, ye children of men"
(Psalms 90:3).*

The history of mankind is one of continuous and unvarying "failure." The reason is that the human race as yet is only in the first stage of its development. The regular cycle of man's life includes two stages: first the natural, afterwards the spiritual – two planes.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:46).

The metamorphosis from the lower to the higher has not yet taken place. God never intended that the physical man should succeed. He must wait until after the change comes. Then he shall have good success.

I do not intend to undertake here to prove the foregoing. I only notice briefly a few points. When I speak above of success, I mean on the higher plane. Man's achievements have been most notable and marvelous, but always on the lower plane.

After the interval of death, whether long or short or instantaneous, the individual picks up the thread of his development and goes on to finish whatever it may be in God's plan precisely as after an interval of natural sleep. As long as one



is on the natural plane, his normal, intended advance is one of blundering, hesitation, and failure. He is advancing all the time, but in a very erratic and apparently round about way.

God utilizes all things, good and bad, to the furtherance of His plans concerning each individual as well as the whole great macrocosm. Hence failure on the physical plane is man's normal status.

THE FAILURE IN EDEN

This is illustrated in the primal failure through which Eden was lost. Listen!

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken (Genesis 3:22-23).

The insertion of the word "also" shows us that as yet man had not partaken of the Tree of Life, and God did not intend that he should and so live forever in a state of failure. ►

So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24).

Man must be excluded from the Tree of Life until he is fit to approach and to partake of it; but meantime the way to it must not be lost, and so Cherubim and flaming sword are placed on guard to keep the way for man until at last he shall enter into the life that is life indeed.

The partaking of the Tree of Life is the crowning work of man's creation and, of course, cannot be realized until the second stage of his progress, for first the natural and afterwards that which is spiritual.

I said to a neighbor today, "It's a good thing to be alive." He had just remarked upon the beauty of the day and the pleasure of knowing that warm weather was approaching. I responded to his cheery greeting and made the above remark, to which he replied, somewhat to my surprise, "Well, I don't know. This is a hard world, full of disappointment and sorrow." We had a little talk. I told him the world was not finished yet. Neither were we, and we would not like to have our world criticized and disparaged before it was complete. Wait until the Maker of all has finished His work; then we would see that all was well done and everyone satisfied.

I don't know how much my neighbor got out of this talk, or whether he got anything at all, but afterwards, speaking of the conversation to my wife, I said, "Probably the reason for him speaking in such a gloomy way is because he has not yet begun to live at all."

He that hath the Son hath life: He that hath not the Son of God hath not life (I John 5:12).

To have the Son is to possess the divine life as Paul the apostle says,



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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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I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Christ is our life, and we live it through His faith – “the faith of the Son of God.”

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

He that hath not this life has no life and knows not the joy of living (John 6:53-57).

THE FAILURE AT THE FLOOD

The next failure after Eden culminated with the flood. Read the first dozen verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis and note what a terrible failure that was. And was it not disgraceful, too? Disgraceful to the Creator, I mean? I once listened to a lecture by a so-called infidel in which he criticized the matter of the flood about as follows. He said that,

According to the Bible, God created man, the first pair; and the first thing they did was to disobey their Maker and get turned out of Eden. Then the first male child that was born became a murderer, a fratricide. Then, as men increased, they grew worse and worse until they became unspeakably wicked and corrupt. So the Creator was sorry that He had made man, the race, and finally He had to drown them all but one family, and begin all over again with that family. But the utter foolishness of the whole procedure is shown by the fact that the race was started

The history of nations is a history of failure ... So also with human organizations of every kind ... political, religious, commercial, or any other.

again after the flood by a family that was no better than those that had drowned, for the first thing Noah did was to get drunk. During his debauch one of his children grossly insulted him so that, when he became sober, he put a perpetual curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham, and forthwith the world began to grow as bad as ever. This declension culminated at the tower of Babel and was punished by the confusion of the tongues and the dispersion.

Now I do not hesitate to admit frankly that from the lower plane the contention of the infidel is well taken. The whole affair seems to be a sad reflection on the wisdom and power of the Creator, a disgrace to Him and a miserable fizzle; and yet he who understands the mystery of the pneumatic (spiritual) can know that there was no failure and no disgrace. It was simply just as God intends, perfectly normal and fully provided for. That which is perfect is not yet come.

THE FAILURE OF ISRAEL

This is fully confirmed and illustrated in the history of God's ancient people, the children of Israel. This is the history of another wretched failure, and one particularly humiliating and disgraceful. God Himself admits this.

God utilizes all things, good and bad, to the furtherance of His plans concerning each individual as well as the whole great macrocosm.

Jehovah started out to make something extra fine of this people, as in Exodus 19:5-6 and Deuteronomy 14:2:

Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. ►

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth

Yet, instead of that the people became worse than the worst of the heathen (Ezekiel 16), and He declares that His holy name was profaned among the heathen on their account (Ezekiel 36:16, 23).

...if you have eyes to see this, it will affect all your observation and thought.

Paul says of this same people that God's name was blasphemed through them. The culmination of Israel's failure was in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, and then they were cast off as the natural branches of the good olive tree, and the grafting in of the branches of the wild olive was accomplished in the call of the Gentiles during this present dispensation.

THE PRESENT WORLD FAILURE

Yet even this "Gentile church" was also to be a failure; that is, the nominal Christian "church." This is declared in several places, notably in II Thessalonians 2 where the great apostasy is set forth. That apostasy had already commenced in Paul's day, and now in our day it has culminated.

Before we notice further this last, let us consider how constant and universal failure is indicated in worldly matters and in the lives of people. The history of nations is a history of failure. We need only mention the names of ancient nations and cities to prove this to anyone familiar with history. Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome all stand for failure, decay and ruin. So also with human organizations of every kind – political, religious,

commercial, or any other.

So it was in the individual lives of the so-called great reformers, philanthropists, religious leaders, statesmen, etc. They have always failed to effect those changes they attempted. Some good has been accomplished – local improvements have been brought about, temporary advantage has been gained – but in the run of years conditions have dropped back into the same old ruts, and not in a few instances the last state has been worse than the former.

Take, for instance, the so-called social evil. The most strenuous efforts to abolish this evil have been made in all civilized countries from time almost immemorial down to the present, and yet the evil is still rampant and uncontrollable. The evil is ingrained in man's nature and can never be eradicated except through the resurrection. This brings us again to present times and conditions.

In the foregoing brief summary I am not trying to prove the proposition with which I started out, i.e., that man's way is downward, universally and inevitably leading to failure. I write for those who are familiar with this fact and accept it. The point is this: Such failure is normal and intentional on the part of the Creator, a part of the process of creation – a process which will end in absolute success. In this success God is the one chiefly interested and responsible. Its non-attainment would involve His discomfiture and defeat – an outcome that is unthinkable. Temporary and intermediate failure as a means to an end is explicable and admissible, but final and eternal failure is impossible, because the ultimate issue depends on Him and on no other.

The ecclesiastical organizations of the entire nominal Christian church constitute "the mystery of iniquity."

Are we living in a time of universal failure? Yes, most surely. I have no controversy with those who think otherwise. I write not for those who have no eyes to see and no mind to perceive and understand. This failure may continue for quite a long time with variations, for there has always been failure in the past, and there will be more failure in the future.

The outlook is by no means pessimistic. On the contrary the brightest and most pronounced optimism may be indulged, for following the night comes the morning, the dawn, leading on to the perfect day.

The world has been led into a great darkness so it may see a great light (Isaiah 9:2). Meantime, blessed are the eyes that perceive the present darkness as well as the oncoming light. Mind you, all this is of God, for all things, absolutely all things, work together for good. The ruin that man brings upon himself is made the occasion and the means of his extrication from that ruin. As it is written,

*Thine own wickedness shall correct thee,
and thy backslidings shall reprove thee...*
(Jeremiah 2:19)

*O Israel, thou hast
destroyed thyself; but in
Me is thy help* (Hosea
13:9).

God's way to light is through darkness. God's way to perfection is through error, defeat, and deterioration. God's way to life is through death.

COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

Now, if you have eyes to see this, it will affect all your observation and thought. For instance,

... failure is normal and intentional on the part of the Creator. a part of the process of creation ... a process which will end in absolute success.

They belong to no one particular sect or branch of a nominal church, but are partly included in them all and partly outside them all.

you will know that there is no such thing in the world today as "institutional" Christianity, that is to say, no such thing as a visible Christian "organization." There are Christians in the world, thank God, a vast multitude of them, mostly uninstructed and ignorant, babes in Christ, carnal and not spiritual, and yet "in Christ," but this Body of true Christians has no outward visible organization. They belong to no one particular sect or branch of a nominal church, but are partly

included in them all and partly outside them all. There is no "body" of believers of which it can truthfully be said, "This is the body of Christ, or the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

All ecclesiastical and religious organizations and institutions are based on worldly principles, maxims, and practices, and thus bear the "mark of the beast" that is characteristic of "this present evil world."

When you read in these days about "Christianity" or hear it talked about, you may know in the great majority of cases that it is "psuedo-Christianity" that is referred to, false, apostate Christianity.

All the Christianity the world knows anything about is the counterfeit. For many centuries there has been no visible Christian church and the world has lost the knowledge of it. It began to deteriorate in the first century of its existence, and the declension has continued until our day. The ecclesiastical organizations of the entire nominal Christian church constitute "the mystery of iniquity." I am writing of the ecclesiastical organizations of all branches of the nominal Christian church, including Protestant, Roman Catholic, the Greek church of Russia ►

and all the sects and denominations, for they all come under one head as apostate, blind and darkened in their church governments and religious systems, copying after the world and not after Christ.

There are many mysteries in the New Testament, sacred secrets revealed to some and withheld from others (Matthew 13:11). The chief of these mysteries are the two contrasting ones, “*the mystery of godliness*” and “*the mystery of iniquity.*” The former is God’s secret purpose in this dispensation of free grace to take out a people for His name, the Body of Christ, the promised seed in which the rest of mankind are to be blessed and regenerated in the ages to come. The latter mystery is the essential apostasy of the nominal Christian church. “*The mystery of godliness*” is good in the form of evil. “*The mystery of iniquity*” is evil in the form of good, and the mystery of it is that all but the very elect are to be deceived in both, calling darkness light and light darkness.

Now notice how this present day failure and deterioration is manifest in the world in general. I speak very briefly and only in outlines, and again I say that I am not trying to prove the matter or to convince any who imagine that everything is going on prosperously and that all the future is rosy and comfortable. Such ones are hopelessly deceived and cannot receive instruction.

International affairs, domestic affairs, religious matters, commercial, social, personal – or any other relationship – everything seems to be hopelessly mixed and in a most bewildering tangle, defying all efforts of extrication like an intricate knot that grows worse and worse the more one tries to untie it.

All we can do is to watch, fearing nothing, but rather with uplifted head and with joyful heart wait for the “*Desire of all nations*” (Haggai 2:7) to appear. Meantime, we need not be surprised at *anything* that might take place, neither need we fear, for our Father is in full control.

The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea (Psalm 93:4).

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1).

“The mystery of godliness” is good in the form of evil. “The mystery of iniquity” is evil in the form of good.

It must be remembered that the history of mankind is one of continuous and unvarying failure, but it must also be remembered that the human race is only in the first stage of its development. The regular cycle of man’s life includes two stages: first the natural, afterwards the spiritual – two planes.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:46).

We need not be surprised at anything that might take place, neither need we fear, for our Father is in full control.

The metamorphosis from the lower to the higher has not yet taken place. God never intended that the physical man should succeed. He must wait until after the change comes. Then he shall have good success.

*And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, **that God may be All in all** (I Corinthians 15:28).*

(1885)



Our Mailbox

I recently talked to you on the phone and I ordered one of your books [*The Salvation of All*] ... I have many questions that I will ask in upcoming days. I know that your teaching is true, but it's like starting over again in Christ.
– FL

Thank you for being there ... “Living daily in Divine Life ... living in your measure ... pouring your measure upon us ... living in the fullness of His Life ...” – quotes from a very wise brother in the Lord. Thank you Clyde, really, I needed this *Daily Email Goodie* this morning ... and I thank my Father in Heaven for being there in Clyde. – NC

Wow, interesting that both last week and this, you have managed [with *Daily Email Goodies*] to start my week out with deep reflections. Thanks for letting God use you.
– TX

You are right we must start with our own families and into our communities to spread the word of God. I do thank you for all the help and encouragement you have shown. May God bless you and your family and your ministry. Keep on keeping on brother. – SC

Your *Daily Email Goodies* have kept me on quite a learning curve this week and last. I've gone from deep, inner reflections to the application of them, and back again – twice!! I had a friend, whom I have never spoken to on spiritual matters, hit my family with the “antagonistic” debate mode on politics and religion, and we had to figure out how to deal with that – “gently and meekly.” Then, while writing out bills, I noticed a \$600 error, on *their* part, that I had to go through a year's worth of receipts to correct, without losing too much of

my peace about it, and your emails kept me reminded of how I should handle all these trials. It's so nice to keep perspectives from God's vantage point. Makes all this seem rather trivial – at least once you get a handle on it anyway.

Thank YOU for sharing your heart with us through the emails ... I only wanted to encourage you that your efforts to share the Love of God with others is at least hitting home here in Texas. – TX

I really appreciate your ministry. I have really enjoyed *The Believer's Warfare*. For years I have struggled with my walk with Christ, “bouncing in and out and fellowship.” Using I John 1:9 as some human effort to try and control the flesh. Through StudyShelf, I have found out about Bob George, Martin Zender, and others. It seems as though I have a lot of legalistic and guilt-ridden programming in my brain still. I would definitely be interested in any book suggestions you may have. – OH

I'm learning that really the most painful times are the most powerful. I wish I had the words to express all He means to me. – NC

I would like to thank you for your blogs, especially those on Universal Reconciliation, which have been an important part of my journey over the last few months.

To cut a long story short, after 20 years of rejecting the Lord, and following all sorts of other belief systems, and sometimes none, I had become a very bitter, ugly person. Last year, I cried out to Jesus and was saved. I was briefly involved at my local Baptist Church but could not stomach the preaching on hell that happened there. God quickly led me to the truth of Universal Salvation, and I feel incredibly lucky that He did this so quickly. I'd found a belief in eternal hell unbearable, especially as my wife, my eldest daughter, and almost everyone I know is agnostic. I almost had a breakdown,

would burst into tears in Church and saw most unsaved people as teetering on the edge of an eternal pit of fire. At the same time I had periods of passionate love for all people, which I knew was God given. When I've brought this (Universal Salvation) up with ministers at local Churches, no one has been hostile, but I have been invited for a coffee (for a chat to convince me of the error of my ways), and told that the Holy Spirit will show me the truth (of eternal hell). The only person who was sympathetic to the view was our local Anglican Vicar. I would still like to be involved in a Church, but your site has shown me that family truly is the Church and this is where I should be focusing my developing faith most.

One of the things that God has made me painfully aware of is the lack of leadership I have given to my wife and family over 15 years. My wife would second this! The problem is to gain her trust again after so many years of letting her down. I think she would like me to lead, but it's something that's going to take time and perseverance. I also tend to go too far in the other direction sometimes, and get so intent on "leading" that I forget the loving her "as Christ loves the Church" and get bossy or ignore really good suggestions that she has as "I'm the boss" (Pride getting in the way!)

There's one other difficulty, which is less painful and acute than it was when I believed in hell. That is, "What's the best way of being the spiritual head of the family when your wife is agnostic?" She is happy for me to teach the children but simply does not believe in God. She doesn't see it as relevant to her in the least. It's upsetting as she is often depressed, has too much to do, and gets very down about things. I know what God will do for her but she's not interested at the moment (she hasn't said "never" though!)

Sorry to ramble on – I have a habit of pouring out my soul by e-mail! But God directed me to UR and your site and your writings and I know I would value your advice. – **UK**



Bible Student's Notebook

The ***Bible Student's Notebook*** has been in continual publication since 1989. Its purpose has been to be "*the Herald of His Grace.*" Its contents have certainly never been mainstream. The desire has always been to keep an open mind regarding truth.

Since the first issue readers have been encouraged to be like the noble Bereans, who "*searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so*" (Acts 17:11), and to "*prove all things*" (I Thessalonians 5:21). This spirit has led the way in each issue.

No claim of infallibility for the contents has ever been made. A close look at the past issues of the ***BSN*** will reveal many changes in understanding over the years.

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