



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume IX  
Issue 202

# That Satan Could Be Sovereign Does Not Exactly Comfort One

by – Martin Zender

In its attempts to protect God from responsibility for His own creation, orthodox theology tells us that God created Satan good and that Satan went bad. That is, he fell. The idea is that God tried His best, but Satan broke the leash. God gave it the old “what for.” How was God to have anticipated Satan’s stubbornness? The resultant “comfort” is, don’t blame God for the trouble Satan has caused. It isn’t God’s fault.

This is comfort? Then give me trouble. What is to stop Satan from rebelling again? From undoing the work of the cross? From ruining yet another universe? From ripping yet another good intention from God’s celestial notebook? If it happened once, it could happen again. And again. And again. And again. Don’t blame God? Then just who is responsible for the universe? Am I to sleep tonight, wondering what havoc will next send the Deity sprinting for His laboratory? I feel a surge of righteous indignation coming on.

Glug. I swallowed it. Wow. It tasted horrible.

I pray that you are able to see the creation of Satan as a credit, not a blame. I pray that God would enable you to hear and believe what the Scriptures have to report on this.

*He was a murderer from the beginning.*

In the gospel of John, chapter 8 and verse 44, this is what Jesus said about the devil. If there are no questions, I’ll quote the apostle John from his first letter, chapter 3, verse 8:

*The devil has sinned from the beginning.*

Here are two very simple, very understandable verses. Read them again. Have your kids read them. Take them to the grocery store and show them to the clerks there. Then ask them if Satan started good and went bad. “Not according to these verses,” they all will say. Heretics!

No, not at all. It’s just that kids and grocery clerks don’t nurse theological biases. Only theologians and their extended families do that. Could anyone doubt, from reading these verses, that God created Satan the way he has always been?

If any are still stuck in this theological bog, here are two more verses that will help pull you out.

*Yahweh has made everything for its own pertinent end, yea even the wicked for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:4).*

*I created the ruiner to harm (Isaiah 54:16).*

These verses have been in the Bible a long time.

(see **SOVEREIGN**, page 1955)

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## Author of the Week: Martin Zender



Martin is a spiritual seeker. He has sampled the religious institutions of men and found them unable to contain the greatness of God. At the age of 19 Martin bought his own copy of the Bible, and began to seek for himself.

If your spiritual life is rutted anywhere between ho-hum and just plain tedious, Zender is sure to jump-start your walk with God into religious-free exhilaration.

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## Bible Student’s Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God’s purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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.

*Bible Student’s Notebook™*

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studyshef.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

### Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office

Nathan H. Pilkington – Shipping

Janet L. Maher – Circulation

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**SOVEREIGN** (continued from page 1953)

Why haven't you seen them? Because they shatter the two most beloved theological biases in existence: free will and eternal torment. A lot of proud people want to keep these biases going. Why? To preserve their pride; and one of their strategies is to hide truth.

If Satan somehow escaped God's control and has his own sovereign little corporation, then God can't help those ensnared by him. You know what the church says: "God won't force Himself on anyone." It's something like God shrugging, pointing to Satan and saying, "Hey! Don't look at me; *he* started it! What do you want *me* to do about it?" This dethrones God, but who really cares? Free will is preserved, eternal torment is ensured, and proud people stay that way.

Yet if these verses mean exactly what they say – that God is responsible for the way Satan is now, and for all the trouble that has ensued – then Satan's free will is the first to go, followed by everyone else's. At this point, if anyone *still* wants to keep eternal torment on the mantel, they've got to make God directly responsible for people being tortured in hell for eternity, a gag-inducing concept only a Calvinist could love.

I realize how hard it is to see God behind everything. It only becomes palatable when one finally grasps the glorious outcome of the universe. I credit God with evil and people say, "How can you *think* that way?!" It's tough some days, it really is; but it's easier than believing that the universe is in chaos and evil is eternal. I can't ask these people, "How can you think *that* way?" because the people who believe this way rarely, if ever, think about it.

Only when you realize that God controls Satan can you look toward a grand consummation with assurance. Orthodoxy will call these heretical thoughts, but they are right thoughts, and they are scriptural thoughts.

Many of my readers have been haunted since childhood by the specter of satanic sovereignty. It must be a nightmare for those brave enough to have thought it through – that Satan could have a free will and that evil is running amok. I pity the despair of those who are mentally equal to such a belief. That

Satan could be sovereign (that is, untouchable) in the realm of evil is horrifying. Mercifully, few think it through. That it is false doctrine will greatly relieve men and women who have dared to meditate upon it.

## THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF GOD?

A local pastor here accuses me of heresy because I believe the Scripture that says God creates evil (Isaiah 45:7). This is heresy? Believing that God is God and responsible for His universe is heresy?

The responsibility of God for everything is the only teaching that credits God with true Godhood. It is also quite aligned with Scripture (Ephesians 1:11; Acts 17:25; Colossians 1:17). The true heresy, I believe, would be teaching the irresponsibility of God.

Face up to this, Pastor Smedly Guggenheim III. (This is not the local pastor's real name. His real name is Smedly Guggenheim IV, but I wish to protect his identity.) *In whatever measure in your mind God is not responsible for something – anything – He is irresponsible.*

It has to be so. Irresponsible means "not responsible," and "not responsible" is the definition of "irresponsible." God is not responsible for evil, you say? Then He's irresponsible.

*God is irresponsible.* Wow. Is this what you believe? The irresponsibility of God?

If you believe it, then preach it. You don't believe that God is responsible for evil? Then say, "God is irresponsible." Say it right now.

Say it out loud in front of a mirror. Say it slowly and separate every word in an exaggerated manner while staring at your lips.

"G-o-d i-s i-r-r-e-s-p-o-n-s-i-b-l-e."

May our gracious God and Father cause you to gag on your words.

*Clanging Gong News*  
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# *I'm Being Set-Up Big Time*

by – Martin Zender

God is setting me up big time. This is not a bad thing, ultimately, but it hurts in the interim. The only thing that gets me through is the realization that this is God's modus operandi. The set-up? It's the David and Goliath Syndrome.

I am surrounded by churches with million-dollar budgets. I drive past huge construction sites and I think, "Hm, must be an airport going in," or, "Hm, that's going to be one heck of a shopping mall," or, "Hm, they must be laying the foundation for a new amusement park." It is only later that I see the cross and read the inevitable sign: "Future Home of the Epic Baptist Church of the Holy Trinity of Rome and Babylon."

Then I think, "Mother of Abraham. Another man-made institution spreading the apostasy via song and interpretive dance. Another bastion of organized religion that will nullify Christ's sacrifice and deify man as the arbiter of his own salvation, while serving really goeey and delicious donuts – with colorful sprinkles."

It is easy to get mad at God for this, especially when I struggle every month to meet my extravagant expenses, such as heat, water, electricity and food. I stand in Wal-Mart and literally debate for several minutes over whether or not to buy name-brand or generic garbage bags. Did I mention that I am one of the few people on the planet – on the planet – who is heralding the true gospel of God and the glorious outcome of infinite grace? If I didn't mention that, it was a heck of an oversight.

So I cry out to God, "What are You doing, God? You supply Your enemies with millions upon millions of dollars to ruin Your name and demean Your cross, while at the same time causing the man You have appointed to herald Your purposes to stand in Wal-Mart and actually start sweating over how much to spend for trash bags. Why, God? Why?"

It finally hit me: the David and Goliath Syndrome.

Folks, God must be preparing for some epic thing. How do I know? He is making Goliath taller and taller. He is arming him with bigger and sharper swords. He is fattening his belly, expanding his muscles, improving

his wardrobe and carpeting his training facilities.

I, in the meantime, opt for the generic trash bags; but here is the one thing I forgot. Oh, it's only a slight little detail that anyone could miss – the elephant in the living room:

*David wins.*

I'm being set-up, and so is Goliath – big time.

## **ONLY OUR CHANGE WILL JUSTIFY OUR EXISTENCE**

Nothing visible protects us. Nothing visible commends us to anyone. We barely have enough clothing. We live for food and water and light and heat. Our cars are old. The members of the church we belong to are scattered to the four corners of the earth. No organization claims us.

We are the opposite, now, of what we shall be.

The world has lapped us, ten times. Now, a hundred times. We are losing the race of life.

This is the David and Goliath Syndrome. It is God making sure that we appear to be the opposite of what we are. When we finally do become what we are destined to be, the universe will stop in its tracks at the manifestation (at last) of God's grace and power.

God's grace and power.

Rodney Dangerfield got no respect. He should have tried being a member of the Body of Christ in an era of apostasy – not a Christian, mind you, but a member of the Body of Christ. Christians are rich and popular, while members of Christ's body are poor and despised. It is doubted by most that they could be anything but deceived.

All our armor is now invisible – Ephesians, chapter 6. To the world, we are stripped. Only our change will justify our existence.

*Clanging Gong News*  
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# Thoughts on Death

by – Martin Zender

## DEATH IS A RETURN

It seems ridiculous to have to assert that the dead do not live. Isn't death the opposite of life? Yes; but because so many mistakenly define death by some of its figurative usages, it's a good thing Revelation 20:5 tells us that,

*The rest of the dead do not live until the thousand years should be finished.*

Dead people do not live. Thank you, John, for the helpful redundancy.

Death is a return. At death, the body returns to the soil from whence it came, and the spirit returns to God:

*By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread, until **you return to the ground**, for from it were you taken. For soil you are, and to soil you shall return (Genesis 3:19).*

*And the spirit, it returns to the One, Elohim, Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).*

## WHERE DOES THE SOUL GO AT DEATH?

"It" doesn't go anywhere, because it's not really a thing. It has no substance. It is figuratively called an "it," much as a person's personality is called an "it." When a person turns dull, for instance, we say, "Where did Dudley's personality go?"

Think of the body as a blue filter, and the spirit as a yellow filter. These are our two elements: body and spirit. As we join the blue filter with the yellow filter, the color green appears. When we separate the filters, however, the color green disappears. Where did the color green go? It simply becomes unseen.

That is where the soul "goes": it disappears. The Hebrew word for "unseen" is *sheol*, and the Greek equivalent is *hades*. This is figuratively where the

soul "goes" upon death. It's as simple as that.

## OUR SPIRIT, IN DEATH, EXISTS WITH GOD

The spirit does not live on in death, but it does exist. Consciousness is not necessary to existence, as is evidenced in sleep; we exist in sleep, but are not aware of it. In death, however, we cannot say that *we* exist, yet *our spirits* do. They exist and persist. They do not disappear, like the soul. They do not decompose, like the body.

Our spirits and those of our loved ones are a treasure kept by God upon death, returned to us in the resurrection in conjunction with a new body.

## THE GENIUS OF SIMULTANEOUS JOY

Our Lord likened death to sleep (John 11:11-14). While death is still an enemy that separates us from God rather than ushering us into His presence, the state of unconsciousness is a mercy – and an ultimate stroke of genius. How is it that the dead and the living, at the snatching away of the Body of Christ, will thrill to the presence of Christ simultaneously?

I had always imagined that the Apostle Paul, for instance, was already in heaven. I anticipated him glancing at his watch upon my eventual arrival and saying, "About time, Zender. You should have been here 600 years ago;" but, no: the Apostle Paul, along with all the dead in Christ, is dead, and the dead know not anything – not heat, nor cold, nor the passage of time. To Paul, the moment of his death will seem like the moment of his resurrection.

Thus, we will all experience the surprise of Christ simultaneously. Isn't that a beautiful thing?

*Clanging Gong News*  
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# *Invisible Gifts Trump All that Is Seen*

by – Martin Zender

One of the handy things for Israel about the gospel given to Abraham (that is, the gospel of the Circumcision, Galatians 2:7) is that its blessings are visible. Think of the manna falling from heaven, the water flowing from the rock, the pillars of cloud and fire, and the magnificent temple Solomon eventually built for the worship of Yahweh. What sort of land did God promise His people? One flowing with milk and honey; milk from the goat, honey from the bee, blessings to be poured upon cereal and dripped onto the tongue.

Not so the evangel of grace. Our blessings are invisible, and yet they far outweigh the physical blessings of Israel. How is this possible? A man drinking milk can still feel condemned; a woman spreading honey on her biscuit might still consider herself unworthy before God.

In contrast, the evangel of the grace of God brings peace with God (Romans 5:1) and the knowledge that sin can no longer bring us into His disfavor (Romans 8:1). It assures us that, whether we are watching or drowsing, we will be living at the same time together with Him (I Thessalonians 5:10-11).

When Israel disobeyed God, the milk and honey failed. When we disobey God, grace overflows from His celestial treasure house (Romans 5:20).

Folks, we've won the lottery!

## **MONEY VS. CELESTIAL BLESSINGS**

... Paul's gospel brings believers spiritual blessings. From Ephesians 1:3:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ.*

Spiritual blessings are invisible, and invisible things are severely devalued by a world bent on sight. The world says, "Show me what you own, and I'll tell you your worth." Spiritual blessings say, "We declare to you your worth." They forget to even ask what you own.

Paul's problem was that he never looked the part of a prosperous individual. For a time – when he first learned of the new gospel in the Arabian desert through multiple

appearances of the risen Christ – Paul was the richest man on the face of the earth. Think about that. He was the first member of the Body of Christ; he was the first to understand that God now saw humanity through Christ; he was the first to be informed of the celestial destiny of Body saints; he was the first to learn that sin now inspired more grace; he was the first human being to whom it was said, "You are coming here. To heaven. With Me. To My throne. To rule with Me at my Father's right hand." Then Christ told him, "Tell the others."

How do you walk out of that desert the same person you were when you walked in?

You don't.

How can you not seek out the others?

You can't.

Paul was a walking treasure house clothed in tent material; he probably made some of his own garments from canvas remnants.

Here he comes now, trudging down the Philippi Way with another traveler, Silas, the two of them kicking up dust into the wind. In spite of the desolate surroundings, both men seem to travel in a divine sheen. Ask Paul about it and he will describe it as, "A realization of Christ." Nothing can touch it.

These are the two richest men on Earth, and yet no one perceives it. Where is their treasure? Flesh and blood cannot reveal it. Paul has a fanny pack, but it's stuffed only with figs and almonds. A flask of water is tied to the pack with a leather cord.

Stop the pair on the road and ask them how it goes; they want to talk, believe me. They want to talk because the treasure they possess is shared via the spoken word. (The small man, Paul, also writes it down.)

*Yet how should they be hearing apart from one heralding? How beautiful are the feet of those bringing an evangel of good! (Romans 10:15, 18).*

Give the small man thirty minutes and he will pass on to you the same information the resurrected Christ gave

him in the desert. (The tall one, Silas, will require an hour; he's not as versed.) The information they give you, if you believe it, will impart to you the same sheen – the same invisible shield worn by these common-looking men.

Walking taller than ever, the two move on, wealthy beyond all human imagining. Why they wear no sandals is anyone's guess.

Two days from now, the Philippian magistrates will beat and jail them.

Two millennia from now, the mainstream Christian religion will forget how poor and wrong heaven's greatest message, on earth, appears.

### **GOD KNOWS HOW MUCH MONEY WE DON'T NEED**

One of the most amazing demonstrations of God's sovereignty over legal tender is recorded in Matthew 17:27.

Some from Jerusalem who collected the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Is not your teacher settling the double drachma tribute?" (Matthew 17:24). Peter wasn't sure, so he just said, "Yes." When he got to where Jesus was, Jesus forestalled him, telling him that the temple tribute should rightly be collected from aliens, not citizens of Israel. "Yet, lest we should be snaring them," Jesus said, "go, cast a fish hook into the sea, and pick up the first fish coming up, and opening its mouth, you will be finding a stater. Getting that, give it to them for Me and you."

On his way to the sea with his pole, Peter must have shook his head and smiled. When he shoved his index finger into the mouth of the first fish and felt the hard coin against the fish's soft innards, he must have closed his eyes and wept.

God knows how much money each of us personally needs. Were it a part of His plan, He could cause this money to grow on our trees, form like crystals in our freezers, or be crapped, gleaming, by our dogs. Instead, He gives us what we need (not necessarily what we want) and arranges things so that we must come to Him for our sufficiency.

God knows how much money we need, yes; but He also knows how much we don't need.

### **THE FONDNESS FOR MONEY**

It's not money that's the root of all evils, but rather a fondness for it.

*For the root of all of the evils is the fondness for*

*money, which some, craving, were led astray from the faith and try themselves on all sides with much pain (I Timothy 6:10).*

These are strong words. The strongest word, however, may very well be the weakest-sounding one: "fondness."

When we picture someone loving money, we picture a pirate thrusting his hands into a treasure chest, bringing up two fistfuls of booty, and then watching the doubloons spill over his fat fingers with an accompanying: "Mine, all mine! Arrrrrr!" Who does that?

Yet love is not the issue here in I Timothy 6:10. The *King James Version* has "love," but of course that's a bad translation. The Greek word is not *agape*, but rather, *philarguria*. The English elements are FONDSILVER. Leave it to the Greeks to develop a single-worded handle for this, the world's most prevalent ill. With "fondness," a whole lot more of us find ourselves snared by the premier sin.

What about the word "craving?" Surely only the likes of Donald Trump and Dr. Evil crave money. Let's see. The Greek word is *orgeo*, and its English element is, EXTEND. Are we extending ourselves financially? In other words, are we reaching out to accomplish more than we can afford? Then we're craving money, and the following things will happen. We will be 1) led away from the faith, and 2) setting ourselves up for much pain. It is not that these things might happen, but that they will happen. It's cause-and-effect.

Being led away from the faith may be as subtle as shifting one's reliance from God to a savings account, or as dramatic as ignoring Christ to pursue the American Dream. "Much pain" speaks for itself.

The remedy to all of this is a realization of I Corinthians 7:31:

*The fashion of this world is passing by.*

Everything man values is going by the wayside. Saints, awake! Pull yourself from the Rat Race. Forsake the world while the forsaking is good and the day of salvation is so acceptable. Live mild and quiet lives in all devoutness. Don't flee to a mountaintop, but do have a mountaintop mentality.

Your Savior will be arriving shortly, and only spiritual values will accompany you to heaven.

*Clanging Gong News*  
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# Dare to Be Happy!

by – Martin Zender

## THAT WHICH IS OUT OF FAITH IS NOT SIN

*Now he who is doubting if he should be eating is condemned, seeing that it is not out of faith. Now everything which is not out of faith is sin (Romans 14:23, CLT).*

If you are a Catholic but have no qualms about eating meat on Friday during Lent, then you can eat with a good conscience and not sin; but if you doubt and still eat, you violate your conscience and sin. It's your own conscience – not God – that makes a thing sin.

God imparts to each a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). How much faith do you have? Measure your freedom. Those with little faith have little freedom, while those with big faith are now free to wander about the cabin.

Lots of faith not only puts wiggle room in your life, but space enough to do cartwheels in. It's the corollary of this verse that shocks: if that which is not out of faith is sin, then that which is out of faith is not sin. Paul begins this section by talking about food, but then applies the principle to "everything."

*Happy is he who is not judging himself in that which he is attesting (Romans 14:22, CLT).*

Who knew that we were actually allowed to be happy in this life?

## SPIRITUAL LIBERTY: TEST, THEN GO FOR IT

Gray might be a good color for a man's suit, but when it comes to living a vibrant and happy life in Christ, gray lacks faith. Be fully assured in your own mind about what you believe and how you want to live. Decide what you're all about, then live with conviction and trust God.

*One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind. He who is disposed to the day, is disposed to it to the Lord; and he who is eating, is eating to the Lord, for he is thanking God (Romans 14:5-6, CLT).*

Some people of Paul's acquaintance knew that God had gifted them with every single day. In the old days

of Israel, the most important day on which to worship God was the Sabbath. For us, no one day is above another, especially not Sunday. Not everyone knows this. To those who do know it, know it with all your heart. To those who don't know it, know it with all your heart. This is my conclusion.

I used to hound people over spiritual liberty. Nowadays, I try one or two times to pry the religion from someone, then quit. If they're still antagonistic, I surrender them to God. If they're doing (or not doing) for the glory of God, God will recognize it. If they're playing a game and trying to score points with the Deity, the work doesn't count. The nice thing for me is, I don't have to figure out the other person. I walk away and return to my own luxurious faith-world. This may come across as cold, but I prefer to think of it as protecting my own peace and happiness.

Here is one of the most liberating passages of Scripture:

*The faith which you have, have for yourself in God's sight. Happy is he who is not judging himself in that which he is attesting (Romans 14:22, CLT).*

"Attesting" is based on the Greek word *dokimazo*, whose English root is "test." We've all tested our boundaries. Just how free are we in Christ? Are we allowed to sleep-in on Sunday? Listen to "worldly" music? Goof off? Eat fried squid? Pursue an odd hobby or a misunderstood occupation? If you've tested the borders on these and other things, and you still feel God's warm smile, then don't just be assured of your freedom: be *fully* assured. Live in it. Kick off your shoes and luxuriate in your own mind.

Paul's only concern: don't flaunt your freedom in front of a weak brother.

*For if, because of food, your brother is sorrowing, you are no longer walking according to love (Romans 14:15, CLT).*

In other words, don't eat squid on the Sabbath in front of a rabbi while listening to "Magic Carpet Ride."

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