



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume IX
Issue 205

Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift

Part III

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).

INFIRMITIES

... Of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities (II Corinthians 12:5).

As we have already considered, suffering has many aspects and dimensions. We are now looking at the category of *common suffering*, those which are *common* to all mankind. We have looked at the trials associated with basic human needs (i.e., food, shelter and clothing). We will now look at the sufferings associated with our frail bodies (i.e., limited, weak, aging, sickly, disease-prone bodies). Paul says regarding these,

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities ... (II Corinthians 12:10).

The English word for “infirmities” means, “an unsound or unhealthy state of the body; weakness; feebleness” (Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828). Thus an infirmary is “a hospital or place where the sick are lodged and nursed” (Webster).

The actual Greek word used by Paul was *astheneia* (*Strong's Greek Lexicon*, #769), meaning, “feebleness; by implication, malady; frailty” and is translated in other places in the *King James Version* as “disease,” “sickness” and “weakness.”

We are talking about the natural problems associated with human frailty. Each of us must suffer through



this, and increasingly so as we age. Paul was well acquainted with an infirmed body as he proclaimed God's Good News. Yet because of Paul's divine perspective, he learned to glory in these infirmities.

You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first (Galatians 4:13).

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities (II Corinthians 11:30).

... Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (II Corinthians 12:9).

... I take pleasure in infirmities ... (II Corinthians 12:10).

Paul knew all too well the infirmity of humanity. How could Paul “take pleasure in” and “glory in” such a frail state? Because he could weigh the counter-abundant glory it would bring!

Do you suffer aches and pains? Are your steps getting slower? Is your physical strength waning? Is your body racked with illness and disease? Why so? – Only because we are not yet home. We suffer all of these things because we are left here on duty, “in His stead.”

(see **SUFFERING**, page 1979)



Dear Precious Family,

New BSN Volumes

This is just a heads-up that we will be having four new *BSN* volumes available soon. Each volume contains 25 issues of the *Bible Student's Notebook*. Some of you have already enjoyed the first four volumes (#1-#100). Before long you will be able to add the next four volumes to your collection (#101-200)!

Each volume is paperback bound in the same size format as the weekly *BSN* issues. Over the years as we have continued to learn and grow in the truth of God's Word, these *BSN* issues have progressed along with us; thus the later issues always reflect our latest scriptural understanding. So much so, that I would encourage you to order the volumes in reverse order – the later volumes first, then working your way back to the beginning of our spiritual and scriptural journey.

Keep an eye on the *BSN* for an announcement of these new volumes.

Summer Outings

This summer different family members have enjoyed kayaking, bicycling and nature excursions together with extended family and friends. There we have taken pleasure in the vastness of God's creative bounty while benefiting from some fresh air, exercise and time with others.

Family Entertainment

Speaking of outdoor fun, Clyde III has a video projector, so a few times this summer we have gathered family and friends in the yard and projected a movie on the side of our bookroom. The "screen" size is 17 ft. All of us are outdoors in our lawn chairs with refreshments. With our below normal temperatures, some have even needed to cover up to keep warm before the movies were over. What a lot of fun!

Granddaughter's Birthday

My second granddaughter just celebrated her 1st birthday. The first one just started preschool. Words can not really express the joy of this chapter of my life. I just love being called "Grandfather" and "Grandpa" (I just love that name).

The hard part is having the grand-girls some 16 hours away from me! But I do get to keep in touch with them by wonderful pictures and videos between visits. We do things using Facebook; what a wonderful tool. I am also able to use this as a tool to post my *Daily Email Goodies* and keep up with friends and saints. If you have a Facebook account, look me up (Clyde Pilkington Jr); I'd love to be your "friend."

Until next week, my love to each of you,



"Grandpa" Pilkington
(Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.)

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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PATRIARCHS

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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SUFFERING (continued from page 1977)

... But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:2).

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

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly (I Corinthians 15:49).

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:21).

Glorious hope indeed! One can rejoice when one sees things from the divine perspective!

**GOD'S VESSELS OF MERCY
TO A GROANING CREATION**

For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now (Romans 8:22).

Looking at the issue of common sufferings we have seen that we have been called, and left here "in Christ's stead," to join in identity with "the whole creation" that "groans and travails in pain together until now."

Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ came and penetrated our darkness and brokenness so that we might know the light and life of the Father. He touches our frailty and emptiness with the love of His Father.

We have been made sons of the Father, too; but we are not taken to our inheritance yet, to our celestial home. Instead, we – members of Christ's Body – have been left here as vessels of mercy to carry on the Son-ship ministry of comfort and consolation.

So, when the tire is flat; when the children are sick; when the neighbor is hurtful; when the monthly bank statement has arrived; when the chores are too many and too harsh; when the physician's office has called with the test results; remember why we are even here in the first place: We – members of His Body – find ourselves deep in the apparent vanity of life as the expression of our Head, illuminating to a groaning and travailing creation our most wonderful Father.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

What a union: He our Head, we His Body!

And He is the Head of the Body, the church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

Head and Body united; we continue the great revelation of Father's unceasing love and unbounded grace. We, along with our Apostle, enter into the "afflictions of Christ."

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the **afflictions of Christ** in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the church (Colossians 1:24).

As with Paul, we are led to long for "the fellowship of His sufferings."

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the **fellowship of His sufferings**, being made conformable unto His death (Philippians 3:10).

The "afflictions of Christ" continue. The Lord Jesus Christ still penetrates the darkness and brokenness, and He does so through us that others may know the light and life of the Father. Through our frailty and emptiness He touches others with the love of the Father. It is thus that we are called to live out – in the moments of apparent vanity – the divine revelation of the Father in the Person of His Son!

Hear again these most glorious words, afresh and anew!

For as the **sufferings of Christ** abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ. And whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of **the same sufferings** which we also suffer: or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as you are **partakers of the sufferings**, so shall you be also of the consolation ...

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; **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.** For we who live are always **delivered unto death for Jesus's sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh** ...

As it is written, **“For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”** Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (II Corinthians 1:5-7; 4:8-11; Romans 8:36-39).

VARIOUS TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

There has no temptation taken you but such as is **common to man**: but God is faithful Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it (I Corinthians 10:13).

Before leaving our consideration of common suffering we will consider the area of temptation. It is surely an area of suffering that “is common to man.”

Trials and temptations are just the common lot of man. Jesus, while He was here on earth, faced the temptations of the Adversary.

Being forty days tempted of the devil ... And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season (Luke 4:2-13).

His trials were such that the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that He was

... In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Why did our Savior go through such trials? He did so that He might be “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*”

Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brothers ... For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

The Lord Jesus Christ identified with us in the sufferings of trials and temptations that are “common to man.” As members of His Body we suffer similarly,

... That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (II Corinthians 1:4).

The trials and temptations that are “common to man” are various – both “*manifold*” (I Peter 1:6) and “*diverse*” (James 1:2).

Paul teaches us that God’s method of dealing with these is not through “*deliverance*” from them. Instead, He makes “*a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*” (I Corinthians 10:13). Note carefully that the Divine “*way of escape*” is to strengthen you that “*you may be able to bear it.*”

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be

revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy (I Peter 4:12-13).

SUFFERING: ABOVE AND BEYOND

... Be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (II Timothy 1:8; KJV).

... Suffer evil with the evangel in accord with the power of God (II Timothy 1:8; CLT).

We have been considering some of the sufferings which are *common* to all mankind; but in addition to these there are those that are *special* and unique to us as believers. We have the honor and privilege of foregoing certain comforts and willingly suffering further inconvenience – even great peril – so as to advance the ministry of reconciliation. These we call *special sufferings*. They are above and beyond the *basic* call of duty. These are sufferings not only of endurance and long-suffering, but of holy valor and spiritual courage. They are the noble pinnacle of our divine appointment,

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto (I Thessalonians 3:3).

“We are located for this,” as the *Concordant Literal Translation* has it. Paul himself was of course the outstanding example of *special suffering*. Paul not only suffered the things which are just “*common to man*” – **FOR** Christ, and **WITH** Christ; but he endured special sufferings **BECAUSE OF** Christ!

Paul aggressively lived and proclaimed the truth at great costs. He would permit nothing to be taken from “*the offence of the cross.*” What a folly to seek to make it “popular” by omission or addition. How little do we appreciate Paul’s parting words:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing (II Timothy 4:7-8).

Paul went above and beyond, into the area of

special sufferings. He was even the Lord’s prisoner, a “*partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God*” (II Timothy 1:8).

It was the special Good News that God had given him that he proclaimed, and for which he suffered. It was his special “*evangel:*”

... *My gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds ...* (II Timothy 2:8-9).

But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated ... we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention (I Thessalonians 2:2).

If we aggressively proclaim the truth, we, too, will become “*partakers of the affliction of the gospel.*” The names, places, and conditions will have changed; but in our own lot, in our own circumstances, in our own unique situations we, too, will be “*shamefully entreated*” and suffer “*as an evil doer,*” for “*all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (II Timothy 3:12).

For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (II Timothy 1:7-9).

What a celestial challenge! We have been called to a high-suffering. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

SUFFERING THE LOSS OF RELIGION

... *Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach* (Hebrews 13:13).

We will now begin looking at some of the venues of special suffering. The first one that we will consider is the loss of religion. Many who profess Christ are seemingly quite comfortable within the confines ►

of religion. They operate there, apparently, without any qualms. Others, however, must follow their consciences *unto Him* “outside the camp.”

Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His Own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach (Hebrews 13:12-13).

Those of us who have gone forth “*unto Him without the camp*” see it as a great blessing of freedom; but at any rate it is still a great loss to us. We have seen before that Paul regarded his own religious past as a “*loss for Christ.*”

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

Paul lost the honor, reputation, respectability and prestige that came along with his religion. Walking away from one's religion can indeed be a great “loss.” Though liberating beyond comparison, it can still be a very painful and gut-wrenching experience of suffering: loss of “place,” loss of “purpose,” loss of “friendship,” loss of “identity,” loss of “history,” loss of “belonging,” loss of “fellowship,” loss of “ministry,” loss of “recognition,” loss of “privilege,” loss of “sentimental” things. Only one who has been through it knows of the great suffering associated with it. Nonetheless, with Paul we can say, “*those I counted loss for Christ.*”

This is suffering that is *above and beyond*, and it will be copiously *surpassed in celestial wealth ... in “due season!”*

EMOTIONAL SUFFERING

*... Being mindful of your **tears** ... (II Timothy 1:4).*

Those who have Christ's life living in them will face many emotional, gut-wrenching sorrows; for, surely, He was,

*a man of **sorrows**, and acquainted with **grief** (Isaiah 53:3).*

Walking with our Lord is not an easy road emotionally. There is a great emotional price to be paid to enter into the “*fellowship of His sufferings.*”

Paul knew well of this sorrow and grief. Hear the heavy, heartfelt words of our own Apostle:

*Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and **with many tears** ... (Acts 20:19).*

*... By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with **tears** (Acts 20:31).*

*For out of much affliction and **anguish of heart** I wrote unto you with **many tears** ... (II Corinthians 2:4).*

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even **weeping**, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18).*

Paul paid a profound price for the sake of the Good News committed to Him. A major part of that cost – which he carried daily inside of him – was that he was exposed to emotional hurt: rejection, betrayal, injustice, slander, bitterness, hate, hostility, disappointment, ridicule and abandonment. This even came from those whom he tried to love and serve, those to and for whom he gave his very life.

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved (II Corinthians 12:15).

How Paul suffered, not only at the hands of sinners, but at the hands of saints as well. This “spending” of Paul's life for others was above and beyond the normal trials and sufferings of life. It was nothing short of “*the life of Jesus*” being “*manifest*” in him (II Corinthians 4:10), “*the spirit of Christ*” operating in and through Paul to others – regardless of the outcome. It was the embodiment of the “*mind of Christ*” in him (Philippians 2:5).

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).

Emotional suffering is not something that was unique to our Lord Jesus Christ, nor Paul, His Apostle to us. Indeed, all of God's saints, through time, have had to bear deep emotional pain and distress.

Listen to Job's words,

*My friends scorn me: but my eye pours out **tears** unto God (Job 16:20).*

Or, listen to David,

*I am **weary** with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my **tears**. My eye is consumed because of **grief**; it waxes old because of all my enemies (Psalms 6:6-7).*

Not only does the Father go through these trials of hurt with us – to comfort us – but He will one day amply reward these sorrows, kind and just as He is.

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name ... (Hebrews 6:10).

Remember,

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalms 126:5-6).

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning (Psalms 30:5).

Tears glisten in the light of faith and hope. – C.H. Spurgeon

When the dark night of our soul has passed, our tears – bottled up by the Father (Psalms 56:8) – shall be rewarded, and then,

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither

sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4).

GOD'S ECONOMIC VESSELS, EVEN IN DEEP POVERTY

... Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality ... (II Corinthians 8:2).

The Macedonian believers were themselves in poverty – “deep poverty” the Scriptures reveal. This was their particular lot, “common to man.” Yet it is these saints who were so abundant in their giving. Read carefully:

*How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their **deep poverty** abounded unto the **riches of their liberality**. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and **beyond their power** they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the **fellowship of the ministering to the saints** (II Corinthians 8:2-4).*

Amazing! Their “fellowship of the ministering to the saints” was “beyond their power.” God used these “deep poverty” vessels, so that they “abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

It does not require that a man have much to be used of God. God's grace can make even those in “deep poverty” liberal givers. Sometimes those with the most abundant resources are actually *conservative* givers, while God uses those with impoverished resources as His channels of *liberal* giving. How can this be?

*For if there is **first a willing mind**, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not (II Corinthians 8:12).*

It is not what is in one's hand that counts – plenty or little – but what is in the heart. “*If there is first a willing mind ...*” God works in available vessels to which He is giving a “willing mind” – “*For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). ▶

He works in available vessels making them channels or conduits of His resources. Can He trust such resources in our hands? Can He trust us in the conversion of *terrestrial* resources into *celestial* wealth? Can He trust us with the investment of fleeting temporal provisions into lasting heavenly assets?

Many saints who have *plenty* will *horde*, or dam-up the resource flow of God. Many a saint in “*deep poverty*” likewise would absorb resources that came into their possession for their own “*needs*.” Not so with the Macedonian believers. Instead of being temporally-sighted, seeing only their own welfare,

they were celestially-sighted, seeing the welfare of others.

This too is nothing short of the “*spirit of Christ*” living out in their lives.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich (II Corinthians 8:9). Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

(to be continued)



I can't do without the *BSN*. Please re-up me for a year ... I keep them all in a binder because ... when my son or daughter asks questions, these articles are an excellent resource to help explain God's plan. Keep the presses for at least the next fifty years or the rapture. – **OH**

I met Robert L. Short at Mars Hill College (North Carolina) shortly after he wrote *The Gospel According to Peanuts* (probably 1967). I loved his written theological viewpoint and still have my autographed copy of the book. His inscription in the book to me (may have been typical) was – May all your griefs be good ones! I remember laughing with him, after I read what he inscribed. Since learning of his going to be with the Lord, I recall how I liked the way he expressed Christianity and I now want to read his other books. – **VA**

Thanks for sharing the information on *God's Forgotten Gift*. It was nice remembering it. Keep up the good work. – **UK**

I forward the *Daily Email Goodies* to all my friends and family. – **TX**

Just a note to say thanks for the *Daily Email Goodies*. I print these and place them in a binder for the family to read on a daily basis. They remind me of the

old “*Daily Bread*” publication. Thanks as well for your labors in other areas. Keep up the good work. – **OH**

Years ago I realized that something was askew with Jesus and the 12's message and Paul's message, but I just thought I wasn't spiritual enough to understand it even as a minister. Now I see that it's two different messages for two different groups with two different eonic destinies. It really makes things easy to understand. It's so great to be able to share stuff with you. – **PA**

Thanks Clyde! It's nice to wake up and read some good stuff [*Daily Email Goodies*]. – **VA**

I've learned a lot from your blog posts. I truly thank God for your wisdom, I don't remember how I found your site but I do thank God for it. You keep me encouraged. Thanks for sharing your wisdom and keep up the good work! – **SC**

Just wanted to let you know that I have shared the *Daily Email Goodie* “*Emotional Suffering*” – from a couple of weeks ago – with several people, and it has ministered well to them. Be encouraged that the words go further than you know! – **VA**

I am so enjoying and learning from your *Daily Email Goodies*. Thanks for sharing these good words! – **SC**

I just wanted to tell you that I absolutely LOVE this article [*Daily Email Goodie* #2123]. Peerless truth that is undeniable! – **HI**