



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume IX
Issue 222

You Are God's Workmanship

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

For we are His workmanship ... (Ephesians 2:10).

Sometimes the Christian life is filled with frustration, discouragement and guilt. These are all rooted in self-reliance, and are a failure of faith to lay hold on the reality of God's workmanship in our lives.

*For it is God Who **works in you** both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).*

William R. Newell well articulated the basis of the distresses of the Christian life:

To "hope to be better" is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.

To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself.

To be discouraged is unbelief – as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you.¹

The fact is simple: you are not self-made; rather, you are "**His** workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). The great, wise and mighty God of the universe is steadily at work in your life. You are His handiwork. He began the work, and He will finish it. This was Paul's confidence.

Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

It is the faithfulness of God that carries out this work in you to its completion.

Faithful is He Who calls you, Who also will do it (I Thessalonians 5:24).

Things are not as they appear. This divine work in

our lives will culminate in "EVERY MAN" having the praise of God. This means that one day God will praise you. How could it be otherwise, for after all, YOU ARE His workmanship!

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes ... and then shall every man have praise of God (I Corinthians 4:5).

If it is true that God has made you and you have not made yourself, if it is true that He began the work in you and will complete it, then why do you fret so? Why are you so anxious and troubled? Why are you so full of care, frustration and discouragement? After all, is *He* not God? Is *He* not in charge? Is not *He* the Creator, and you are His creature? Rest in the peace of this wonderful truth.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

THE LONG PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual growth does not occur at the rate, or in the methods that are traditionally accepted. Instead, God works steadily and effectually for His Own purpose. He is in no rush by human schedule. He works to bring us to a place of spiritual quietness which, along with assurance, is the genuine effect of righteousness.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever (Isaiah 32:17).

His divine work may not be done in accordance with your time tables, or by your predetermined methods

(see **WORKMANSHIP**, page 2115)

1. William R. Newell, *Romans, Verse by Verse*.

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume IX, No. 222 – January 5, 2010

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 law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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)

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WORKMANSHIP (continued from page 2113)

or standards. Nonetheless, He is the Creator, and you are His creature. He is the Potter, and you are His clay. He molds and fashions you according to His Own will and design.

... You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our Potter; and we all are the work of Your hand (Isaiah 64:8).

Even Paul echoes these important thoughts:

Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Romans 9:21).

The Master Potter is faithfully and steadily at work in you. Make no mistake about it: He works *all things* after His Own will.

... Who works all things after the counsel of His Own will (Ephesians 1:11).

His hand in your life leaves *no* place untouched. Even that which seemingly is working against you is used by your Father to fulfill His Own good purpose in your life.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

This truth can be seen in the life of our Apostle. Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. The circumstances of his life had the appearance of working negatively – extremely negatively. Yet, he wrote with such confidence that the opposite was actually true:

But I would that you should understand, brothers, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12).

Another powerful example is demonstrated in the life of Joseph. His brothers had sold him into slavery. This had been, upon the surface, a very sad and unfortunate turn of events; but Joseph saw the divine purpose:

But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good (Genesis 50:20).

At times God will even lead you through “*the valley of the shadow of death;*” but as long as He is with you, even the darkest, lowest valley is really the **higher ground!**

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:4).

Paul experienced such gut-wrenching hardness that at times he even “despaired of life.”

...We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (II Corinthians 1:8).

However, he was quick to add,

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, **that** we should not trust in ourselves, **but in God** Who raises the dead (II Corinthians 1:9).

The fact is simple – you can trust God. *He alone* is truly trustworthy; and He has a definite goal in sight for you! Your Father is taking you on a journey that has as its final goal conformity unto Christ.

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

To be conformed to the image of His Son is your predestination. To take you on this journey will mean many years of wilderness and valleys. His current goal is to bring you to a place where you find your completeness, satisfaction, contentment, glory, thanksgiving and rejoicing in Him alone, and not in your circumstances. This is what a walk of faith is all about: *not* saying, “Look, look ...” while you point to the circumstances all around you, but saying, “Look, look ...” while you point to your Lord and His cross; for Christ and His finished cross-work are the very object of Father’s eye; and so He is working to make them the object of yours as well.

YOU ARE GOD’S ORIGINAL

Oscar Wilde wisely said, “Be yourself: everyone else is already taken.”

The fact is, you are uniquely special; God made you that way. His fingerprints are all over you. You are His distinct handiwork, as unique as the individual snowflakes.

God makes no two snowflakes alike – yet each one is a genuine snowflake. You are a genuine original as well; He did not stamp you out by some uniform template. He made you an original, and it is important for you to simply **BE** who He has made you – your own unique self.

Don't waste your precious life trying to be someone you are not – someone other than who God has made you. The world (often including family and friends, and even members of Christ's Body!) will often try to mold you into someone other than who you really are. Dare to be that special person whom God has made you in Christ – regardless of what anyone else thinks about it!

There is a definite reason you are who you are. There is a reason that God has made you distinctively different. God has created you the way you are for His Own special purpose and pleasure.

... You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:11).

Remember, ultimately you have only one Person to please: the One who has made you after His Own design. To attempt to please others is a vicious trap that actually disqualifies you from being Christ's servant.

... Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

Why is this so? Because you can't possibly "please" everyone. If you seek to please men (*i.e.*, trying not to "hurt anyone's feelings," or "upset anyone," or "insult anyone," or "rub anyone the wrong way"; or trying to "make everyone happy," or "do what everyone wants," etc.), then you will end up not pleasing and serving God. Obviously this doesn't mean you should deliberately seek to displease others; but ultimately, no matter what you do or say, it will meet with *someone's* disapproval and displeasure, and if you are always worrying about pleasing everyone, the result will be that you will not please God.

If your goal and object are to try to please others, then you will be held in the *constant* bondage of their ever-changing opinions, demands, suggestions, likes and dislikes. It is tiring to be trying always to be what others want you to be – to live up to their endless expectations and visions of what they think you should do, and of who they think you should be. The good news is that there is no such pressure with God. God loves and accepts you just as you are; after all, He is the One who made you that way.

Maybe there are things you don't like about yourself. No worries; you are God's workmanship – His "work-in-progress." This leaves no place for self-improvement or self-effort. Rest in Father's wisdom and ability and learn, by faith in Him, to be comfortable in your own skin. Remember this divine

process was something about which Paul became confident (Philippians 1:6).

Don't let anyone – *even yourself* – try to push you around. Don't let others try to live your life for you. Everyone has been given their *own* life to live. No one has the right to live their life *and then* turn around and try to live your life for you as well. This is not fair to you, nor is it fair to God and His design and work in you. Stop worrying about what others think of you. Stop being anxious about the approval and acceptance of others. Enjoy being who God made you to be.

THE UNIQUENESS OF YOUR JOURNEY

On our journey through this life, you and I may be at different places. Being at different places does not necessarily mean that either of us is "ahead" or "behind" of the other spiritually. It just means the Lord needs to take us on different (and yet at the same time similar) paths due to the uniqueness of our personalities, upbringing and influences, as well as His Own unique purpose in our lives – all as it pleases Him.

... God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him (I Corinthians 12:18).

In our diversities, He works *all in all!*

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Who works all in all (I Corinthians 12:6).

Miles Stanford stirringly wrote about this process:

So many of us, after having entered into some of the deeper realities of our Lord, seek immediately to pull or push others into this wonderful advancement; and then we wonder why they are so slow to learn and seemingly apathetic in their understanding and concern. We so easily forget the many years it took, and by what wandering wilderness ways our Lord had to traverse with us in order to bring us over Jordan and into Canaan.

God is active in your life, and in the lives of your brethren. You do not need to live a life filled with care, frustration, discouragement and guilt concerning where the Father has you on your journey. You can by faith lay hold of the reality of *His Own* unique and personal workmanship in your life. Rest in *His* great workmanship. Be content with what *He* is accomplishing.

Paul reminds you of what your walk with the Lord is all about:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Colossians 2:6).

You are to continue walking in divine life the same way you received it! How did you receive it?

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship ... (Ephesians 2:8-10).

You began the divine life by grace through faith, without works, and Paul says *this* is the way you continue to walk in it. **“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”**

The Galatian believers had fallen into the trap of believing they were somehow their own workmanship – that their life was of their own making, that they were somehow in control of their own small universe.

... Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3:1-3).

Again, Paul brings us to this basic principle of life:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

Rest, look and wait upon your Father. Let your *only* expectation be from Him, and you will never be disappointed!

*My soul, wait ONLY upon God; for my **expectation is from Him** (Psalm 62:5).*

*But they who **wait upon the Lord** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).*

*For the earnest **expectation** of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19).*

Have complete confidence in God, your Father. Your journey is as unique as you are. What He began in you, He will see to its full completion. *He **will** do it!*

BEING WHO YOU ARE

I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

We are God’s wonderful creation; but we are frequently

imitators of others. We, often unconsciously, pattern our lives after those whom we admire, or those who are close to us. We adopt their likes and dislikes, their habits, their viewpoints, even their routines.

This is not necessarily a bad thing for you. Those in your life are there for a reason – God uses them, both positively and negatively, as part of His molding of your life. Positively, He uses aspects of someone’s life to awaken your heart to something lacking in your own, and then He steadily develops it in you. Negatively, He uses something in the life of another to move your heart away from a certain trait, character or lifestyle – to purge something out of your life.

You are also in the lives of others as God’s influencing agent in them as well. He uses this divine placement of our lives reciprocally. Like stones in a rock tumbler, the stones actually are being used as a part of the polishing process – mutually “grinding” each other in the midst of agitating circumstances until a smooth, beautiful stone appears from an otherwise rough and ordinary rock.

Conversely, maybe you have allowed others to overstep this mutual influence to actually attempt to live your life for you – or at least parts of it. In your relationship with them you have not been free to follow your own heart, thus creating apprehension, tension, anxiety, stress and heartache. Maybe your desire for “peace” and “harmony” with certain people close to you; your dread of the potential “drama” and “displeasure” they can create; or even your fear of losing their “friendship” and “love,” or your desire to be “accepted” or “approved” by them has caused you to give way to them and to lose yourself in the process.

You must never forget that you are not only God’s handiwork by your entrance into the first creation (your birth), but you are even more so His “masterpiece-in-progress” through His new creation (“in Christ”). God’s crafting of you is a unique expression of Himself, even in the smallest and seemingly insignificant matters of life. No detail of His creation is too small for His care and concern.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31).

Refuse to allow anyone but God to be God in your life. Decline the attempts of others to live their lives in you – this is God’s place alone. Resist the outside pressure to conform. ►

God does not need two of the exact same person. Even seemingly “identical” twins are not exact mirror images of each other in every way. You are designed to be a unique manifestation of some wonderful aspect of God. Some of this may be in the “rough” presently, but He continues His steady, faithful work in you, at His Own pace as it pleases Him. God’s plan of redemption includes “rescuing” who you really are – your unique personality – from the original creation; of “cutting” and “polishing” His “diamond in the rough” until it radiates His glorious reflection, which is all *His* work and timing.

You are unique. You have a unique purpose. You uniquely belong to Him. Honor Him by being who you are.

For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living (Romans 14:7-9).

DON’T KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE?

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (II Corinthians 3:17).

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 dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him (Colossians 2:8-10).

Does it seem at times you have lost your way? Does it seem like you don’t even know who you really are? Perhaps this is because others have been attempting to fulfill the role of God in your life. Maybe for years you have given way to their endless pressure and manipulation; but manipulation is not God’s method. God’s way is freedom, and He wants you to enjoy the freedom to know and to be who He has made you to be.

How do you find the real you? It may be quite different than you think.

It is not to be found in the methods and systems of man. Knowing who you really are doesn’t come from self-analysis, psychotherapy, counseling or self-help books and seminars, etc. Since God made you who you are, any attempt to “find yourself” – apart from Him – is simply futile. He alone knows who you really are. You must find yourself in Him.

Paul warned the Colossian saints of worldly philosophy, vain deceit, human traditions and worldly rudiments, which all distract you from being able to see clearly who and what you really are – **“complete in Him.”**

There are two simple principles given to us by Paul that are key to knowing who we really are: (1) Look to Christ and (2) Follow your heart.

LOOK TO CHRIST

God has made you who you are as a part of His new creation. Any attempt at knowing who you really are must start here.

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

So, who are you, really? A *new creature in Christ!*

For to me to live is Christ ... (Philippians 1:21).

I am crucified ... but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

Since it is true that you no longer live, but Christ lives in you, let me ask you this question: If you want to get to know who you are, who are you going to have to get to know? *Him!* In other words, to discover your true identity, you will have to discover Him Who alone is your life.

It is impossible to know who you really are apart from Him – apart from knowing Him. Realizing this one simple truth frees you from the “know thyself” world-view. You are delivered from it by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom you have your new, true identity.

*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 call of the believer’s life is not by some human, self-centered psychology of “know thyself,” but by the divine, Christ-centered spirituality of “*know Him*.”

E.W. Bullinger wrote,

The ancient philosophy had a motto continually sounding in its ears, “Know thyself” ... It was carved over all the schools and seats of learning, its letters may be seen today carved in the marble ruins of Greece. It was good, so far as man’s

wisdom went; it was the best that man could do! Oh, but how impossible to obey it! It is the one thing man *never* could do. It is the one thing none of us know. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9). If we could know ourselves thus, what then? When we came to this knowledge, and saw ourselves and our ruin, would it not end in despair? No, we can only know ourselves by the knowledge of Christ.*

Christianity came and brought with it a loftier motto, a heavenly wisdom, a Divine truth: *“That I may know Him.”*²

Paul also wrote,

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3:17-18).

Beholding and Becoming

As you behold the glory of the Lord, you are changed into His image. This is the principle of *Beholding and Becoming*. As you **BEHOLD** Him, you are transformed into His image. This *beholding and becoming* is carried out and accomplished in the very details of your life. The Father is steadily at work in you, manifesting the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus He accomplishes this in the most difficult circumstances life may throw at you. This is the great plan of God in your life.

Changed

The Father is transforming you, so that you are being **“changed into the same image.”** This word “changed” is the Greek word *metamorphoō* from which we get our word “metamorphose,” which Webster defines as, “to change into a different form; to transform.”³

It appears three other times in the Greek Scriptures.

It is used twice of the Lord Jesus Christ’s transfiguration:

*... Jesus ... was **transfigured** [metamorphoō] before them (Mark 9:2).*

2. E.W. Bullinger, *The Works of E.W. Bullinger, Vol. 1*, Bible Student’s Press, 2008; The Christian’s Standing, Object, and Hope.
3. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

*And was **transfigured** [metamorphoō] before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light (Matthew 17:2).*

This same word also is used by Paul in Romans 12.

*Be not conformed to this world: but **be transformed** [metamorphoō] ... (:2).*

Image

Just exactly what is this “change”? You are being **TRANSFORMED “into the same image”** of the Son. The Greek word for “image” is *eikōn*. Its usage by Paul the Apostle is very telling. He uses this word in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ being in the “*image of God.*”

*... Christ, Who is **the image** [eikōn] of God ... (II Corinthians 4:4).*

*... Who is **the image** [eikōn] of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15).*

Then Paul uses this same word in reference to believers:

*... He also did predestinate to be conformed **to the image** [eikōn] of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).*

*As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear **the image** [eikōn] of the Heavenly (I Corinthians 15:49).*

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after **the image** [eikōn] of Him Who created him (Colossians 3:10).*

The Lord Jesus Christ is in “*the image of God,*” and you are being transformed into “*the image of His Son.*”

The first principle of knowing who you *really* are is to look to Him, to know Him, to keep your eyes upon Him – for all that you are is “*in Him.*”

Well did the hymn writer pen,

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There’s light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.⁴

FOLLOW YOUR HEART

*For it is God Who **works in you** both to will and to do of His good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13).

This is one of the most important verses dealing with the life of God in you. Here is what we see in this verse:

- God is at work in you,
- He works in you to “will,” and
- He also works in you the “do”

Here you can see that Father is at work in you. What a wonderful truth!

You also see He is accomplishing two things:

- (1) He is putting His “will” in you – your “want to”;
AND
- (2) He is working the “do” in you as well – the ability to “do” what He has put on your heart (the “will”).

Allow this astonishing truth to get a hold of you!

Will and Do

This is God’s work in your life in a nutshell – “to will and to do.” Your Father is working something into you (“It is God Who works in you”); He is working into you His Own will (“to will”). He is putting His own “WANT TO” in you. This has always been His plan – to put in the believers’ heart the desires HE wills them to have, so that they will “do” His will.

Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart (Psalms 37:4).

In this Hebrew Scripture we see these same two principles that we have been considering in Paul’s writings. First: “delight yourself also in the Lord” (keep your eyes on Him) and, Second: “He shall give you the desires of your heart” (follow your heart).

Someone may ask, “Can’t your heart lead you astray?” Surely, it can; but not while it is set on the Lord and things above (Colossians 3:2-3).

While you look to Him, setting your affection there, your Father places in you your heart’s desires. Belonging to Him, you are given a willing heart for the details of His life and purpose, making you His instrument. Trust and acknowledge the in-working of His will. Stay close to Him and *FOLLOW YOUR HEART!* You thus honor God and His design by being you.

TRUSTING YOUR FATHER’S WORKMANSHIP

Be honest. Do you feel God’s “will” (want-to) is lacking in you? Do you feel as though He is working too slowly? Don’t be discouraged with His work. Trust Him implicitly. By patience and faith wait upon Him to do His work. His will in you is His responsibility.

Or, maybe you have the “will,” but do not have the second part yet – the “do” (“**both to will AND to do of His good pleasure**”). Perhaps you identify with these words of Paul,

*... For **to will** is present with me; but **how to perform** that which is good I find not* (Romans 7:18).

Again, do not be disappointed with His work. Simply trust Him unreservedly. Wait patiently upon Him. The **doing** of His will is also His responsibility. He is faithful and will do His work!

Do you despair over what you don’t have? Maybe your lack of talent, or ability, or resources, or experience, or money, etc.? Do you think they hinder God’s work in your life? Do not fret. His work is larger than all of these. He is not looking at what you don’t have – but what you do have, what He has given you. Well did Paul say,

*... It is accepted according to that a man has, and **not according to that he has not*** (II Corinthians 8:12).

Remember you are who you are because God has made you that way; and you have what you have because He gave it to you.

*For who makes you to differ from another?
And what have you that you did not receive?*
(I Corinthians 4:7a).

Father is responsible for who you are and what you have. God will use these in His Own wisdom and at His own discretion..

4. *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* (1922), Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863-1961).

