



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIII
Issue 316

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

A Complaining Spirit

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts (Jude 1:16, KJV).

Do not be discontented (I Corinthians 10:10, Weymouth).

In all that you do, avoid grumbling (Philippians 2:14, Moffatt).

Complaining is a prominent Adamic pastime. We grumble and whine about the weather, our jobs, our spouses, our governments, our finances – just about our lives in general. Like spoiled children, discontentment is an unthankful heart-attitude of protest towards Father. Our hearts gripe, huff, sulk, moan and bellyache about everything. Ugh! Grrr!



therewith to be content (KJV).

... As to me, I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied ... (Darby).

... For my part I have learned, whatever be my outward experiences, to be content (Weymouth).

CONTENTMENT:

THE DIVINE CONTRAST OF COMPLAINING

Contentment is a rare quality. It has been so from the beginning. Adam and Eve had abundant bounty from God's hand all around them. Only one thing was withheld from them: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; but it was the very thing that they wanted and desired. This one thing kept them discontent: *if only* they could have the fruit from *this* tree their lives would be complete and fulfilled – or so they thought.

Discontentment is at the core of the Adamic heart, whereas *contentment* is the Divine work on the renewed mind – a heavenly learning process. It is spiritually learned. Paul tells us so. It was even necessary that our apostle complete this course of spiritual instruction. Let's allow this variety of translations from Philippians 4:11 to speak truly to us.

... I have learned, in whatsoever state I am,

Oh, that we had the spiritual ears to hear these words deep within our hearts! Oh, that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened. Oh, that our hearts would begin to awaken to the true spirit of contentment!

Paul goes on to write to Timothy of contentment's "great gain."

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment let us be therewith content (I Timothy 6:6-8).

(see *WHINE*, page 2879)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic 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 freedom from 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).

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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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THE ANTIDOTE FOR COMPLAINING IS FOUND IN THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is the divine answer to discontentment. Only faith from God can lay hold on the grand truth that *all things come from God*. This realization transforms human complaining into divine contentment!

All things are of God (II Corinthians 5:18).

For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things (Romans 11:36).

There is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things (I Corinthians 8:6).

Here is the entrance of faith. The Scriptures make the plain, bold statement that *“all things are of God.”* Therefore faith will have the daring audacity actually to thank Him for *“all things”* that come in life, and will, with Job, say,

Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 2:10; 1:22).

ALL OF OUR COMPLAINING IS ACTUALLY AGAINST FATHER

When we complain about spouses, our governments, our jobs, our responsibilities, we are actually complaining against the SOURCE of *“all things.”* It is crucial that we come to this realization: since everything comes from Father, our discontentment and complaining, our grumbling and whining, is all directly against Him. It is a lapse of faith in Him – in His sovereign, loving control of His Own universe.

When we bewail our wife or husband, rail against and mock our president, lament and criticize our employer, bemoan the downward turn of our financial circumstances, these are all actually directed to God. Remember the Adamic complaint and accusation? *“The woman whom You gave to me ...”* (Genesis 3:12).

Oh, that Father would grant us the faith to hear this same complaint and accusation in ourselves!

NOT GIVEN TO “WHINE”

Years ago a friend of mine had been having a little trouble with his small daughter’s recent attitude. On the way home from a Bible study one night, while traveling in the car, she was quite touched and voiced her genuine sorrow for her unthankfulness. It was quite a touching moment.

Asking his daughter what had brought about this sudden change of heart, she said that it was a verse that had been read during Bible study. The father was somewhat baffled, since he could not even recall any discussion on this particular subject. Inquiring further, she responded that it had been the verse that said, *“not given to whine.”* Although her touching moment was very serious to her, the thankful father could not help but smile to himself.

Although the specific words *“not given to whine”* obviously are not found in Scripture, it is nonetheless true and a great play on words that should serve as a reminder to adults that *“wine”* is not the only potential *“spirit”* that can mar our lives. The *“spirit”* of *“whine”* is no less dishonoring towards our Father than her attitude was toward her father.

THANKING FATHER FOR EVERYTHING

Here is the greatest lesson of life, what life is all about: Truly trusting Father *in everything*, to the point that we also are thanking Him *for everything* – the *“evil”* as well as the *“good,”* the *“taking away”* as well as the *“giving.”*

Faith is the divinely-given spiritual courage and strength actually to believe Father *regardless of the circumstances* – that daring transcendent boldness simply to believe Him over our emotions, over our senses, over our desires, that plain audacity of faith just to believe Him!

In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (I Thessalonians 5:18).

Giving thanks always FOR ALL THINGS to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20). ■

Be Conciliated to God

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, "**Be conciliated to God!**" (II Corinthians 5:20).

Is God entreating me to be at peace with Him? I thought He was angry with me because of my sins."

Not so! God, in His fathomless grace, condescends to do all of the entreating now! Don't drown out His entreaties with your pleadings for forgiveness, for He gives you His Word that your sins already have been taken care of, once and for all, by the Savior, Christ Jesus, Who died for you on the cross.

"But how can I be sure?"

Your salvation is guaranteed by the fact that God raised Him from the dead. God's Word assures us that Christ "was given up because of our offenses, and was roused because of our justifying" (Romans 4:25 CLNT¹).

Your faith in these facts is all that really matters. There is nothing left for you to do, except to believe God.

Yet to him who is not working, yet is believing on Him Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

For in grace are you saved, and this is not out of you; [it is an out-right gift, not based on anything which you may do, but based on His love for you. These things are so,] lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievement are we (Ephesians 2:6-10).

GRACE OVERWHELMS UNBELIEF

If your faith is genuine, this is only because you have

been graciously granted, "for Christ's sake, ... to be believing on Him" (Philippians 1:29). The Lord Jesus did not merely offer you a "chance" to believe. No, He cares so much for God's chosen ones that He provides for them ever so much better than that. Besides, before you had the spirit, you were "not able to know" concerning spiritual things (I Corinthians 2:14). Then when God called you, He was quite as able to unveil His Son in you as He was in Paul (Galatians 1:15-16).

The reason why anyone believes is not because of something he has done, but because of something He, the Lord Jesus, has done! "The grace of our Lord overwhelms" our unbelief "with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 1:14). God already chose those "in Christ" long ago, so there is no risk involved at all (Ephesians 1:4-6).

GOD IS COMMENDING HIS LOVE

God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes (Romans 5:8).

God has done it all. Salvation is "of the Lord." It is by God in man, not God and man!

He gave His Son to die for you; He made Him to be a sin offering for your sake; He gives you His Own righteousness through Christ. He has provided everything because He knows that you cannot provide it yourself. Rather you should recognize that God has already done it by Himself, for Himself, so He needs no conciliation. But you do! All of the estrangement is on your side. The quickest way to rid yourself of it is to listen to His entreaties, and heed them.

Sit down and think this over: The moment your

1. Scripture quotes throughout are taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament.

thoughts stray back to yourself, you are off track.

Let me tell you a secret: The greatest thing, after all, is not *your* salvation, but *God's* glory. That is really His main reason for saving you. He loves you, and He never would have allowed sin to come between you and Himself in the first place if it would not eventually be to His glory and for your greatest good.

Ponder this: God is actually entreating *you* to be conciliated, or at peace, with Him. He has done *everything* necessary to justify you, so that you may walk boldly into His presence (Romans 5:1-2). Right now you may not be able to realize all of this fully, but *respond* to His entreaty – *Be Conciliated to God!* And *thank Him* for His unspeakable gift!

For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, died (Romans 5:6).

God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes. Much rather, then, being now justified in His blood, we shall be saved from indignation, through Him. For if, being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life. Yet not only so, but we are glorying also in God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we now obtained the conciliation (Romans 5:6, 8-11).

Unsearchable Riches, Vol. 81, page 247ff

The Necessity of Knowing Paul's Writings

by — Win Johnson (-1993)

Paul is God's messenger and apostle to the Gentiles, therefore, he who knows not Paul's Gospel is ignorant of what God has to say in these times of the Gentiles.

Paul's letters constitute an *independent* and *complete* body of doctrine. They reveal the true character, calling and destiny of the Body of Christ. The various secrets called *mysteries* (and there are more than a dozen of these mysteries) are revealed by Paul's letters. Consequently, they reveal how men are to worship God in this dispensation, so that if you are ignorant of Paul's letters, you are, and shall be ignorant of all real and genuine knowledge. Knowledge which the school of man imparts is either facts about the present world or vain imaginations of philosophers.

In the four "Gospels," Christ is dealing with the Jews (Romans 15:8), and James, Peter and John with Jewish believers. So Paul's letters remain *alone* to instruct the present believer regarding his *place* and *privilege* in *Christ*. However much the other portions of Scripture may instruct us, we know that they are not primarily concerning us.

He who is ignorant of Paul's writings has rejected, or at least neglected, messages that our risen Lord, Who has sent the epistles of Paul to us, intended that we should constantly read, learn and abide in. No Apostle speaks with authority *to us* but Paul.

He Who remains ignorant of Paul's epistles, or reads them lightly, will not become established. Paul distinctly declares this (Romans 16:25; Galatians 1:11-12; I Timothy 1:10-11).

Paul is Christ's messenger sent to you and to me by a risen Christ Who appeared to him on the Damascus Road, sending him as a special commissioner to us to inform us, in the most expressed terms, of what Christ did at Calvary.

Paul has spoken with authority from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ those great facts which concern Christ and the purposes of God in Him, which pertain to the present, and no man can neglect, reject, despise or treat doubtfully these Pauline Epistles and have divine authority in his ministry.

What the BIBCE STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK Is All About

For those of you who are new to our periodical,
Welcome!

The first thing that may be helpful for you to know about the *BSN* is that it is intended to be a “Notebook.” As you may know, the printed copies actually come hole-punched for three-ring-binders, and twice a year (every 26 issues) we publish them into bound paperback volumes.

I have always had a compelling need to organize my scriptural research, as well as my favorite study resources, into “one place.” Thus, the *BSN* is motivated first and foremost as a collection of my personal studies and valuable, thought-provoking writings of others into a “Notebook.” This allows me to have them all in one place for my personal use, and for that of my family and our posterity. I regularly reference these “Notebooks” in my study and in seeking to provide help to my family and joy to the lives of others (II Corinthians 1:24).

Hopefully, my children, grandchildren, etc. will treasure this collection of bound “Notebooks” (we already are up to 12 in print!). These will chronicle their father’s and grandfather’s spiritual journey and scriptural studies, as well as provide them with a wealth of readings that he valued personally (from dear friends, and from those from whom he gleaned).

Over the past 22 years many others, perhaps even yourselves, have been blessed by this process as well. To date nearly 100,000 copies of *BSN* issues are in print, not to mention the many electronic ones that have been utilized.

A GLEANER BY NATURE

Anyone who knows me knows that I have always been a gleaner by nature. Over these years I probably have collected thousands of quotations and articles that have spoken to me from the books and materials that I have read. I can hardly read anything without a highlighter in hand.

These “highlights” have often found their way into the

BSN. Although some quotations are from quite *trusted* sources, I do not always particularly endorse the authors or books from which the quotations are taken.

Sometimes, when I am reading, it is simply amazing to me how certain authors can articulate so clearly concerning some grand truth that their writings otherwise generally seem to deny. The particular truth that they convey seems oddly “out of place”; but in some ways, the more unlikely the source, the more amazing it seems to me to testify of the truth and how God can get it said even through them; after all, even Paul went so far as to quote a pagan poet on Mars’ Hill. So, in the Pauline pattern, never be surprised at the sources you may see in the *BSN*.

THE NATURE OF THE *BSN*

Although accuracy is extremely important to us in this process, it is not the primary factor. If we await complete accuracy we would *never* print anything!

Writing never seems to be “finished.” Every time I re-read my own writings I inevitably see something that I would add or change. Some time ago I read something encouraging from Norman Grubb (1895-1993), in this regard.

I don’t know if every writer on the things of the Spirit has the same problem – no sooner have I completed one manuscript than I see this and this and this which could be put much more clearly, or whole areas of insights which should be added. I feel like the automobile dealers who *must* produce a new model each year!
— *God Unlimited*

The *BSN* is *more* about a *journey* – a *journey to truth!* I do not always agree with every word or point that we run in every issue. Frankly, I do not even agree with some of my own writings, from time to time, that have appeared in past issues of the *BSN*. I see this as *growth* and *progress* in the great adventure of faith.

The intended nature of the *BSN* is one of provoking ourselves and others *toward* the truth, and a genuine, sin-

cere hunger and passion to *advance* in our studies as we walk with Father.

We seek to escape uniformity, promoting and stimulating *personal* study of the Scriptures (II Timothy 2:15). This has been our *attitude* since our beginning, back in 1989. Here is a section from that *very first* issue:

We have no corner on truth, nor does anyone else. None possesses *all truth* infallibly. Therefore we seek to fellowship with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and take pleasure in His precious Word. We agree with the words of George Whitefield when he said,

I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the Book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think that they are united to our common Head.

We desire to avoid destructive *uniformity* and allow for differences of opinion. We don't expect our readers to agree with everything that will appear within the pages of this publication. But we do trust that you will study out the information and that it will stimulate further Bible study. As one editor has so well said,

I hope anyone following after me will go further than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the Word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found.

So do not be surprised if, from time to time, you read articles which reflect change from previous things which we have said or written. This is progress. We simply ask that you keep an open Bible and an open mind.

In plain words: We have never claimed infallibility for the *BSN*. We have only asked our readers to be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

CONTRASTING (continued from back page)

make the trillions of years that evolutionists talk about seem like the blink of an eye.

Obviously, eternal love and eternal punishment don't mix. When a father punishes his children justly, his goal is for the growth and well-being of the child. It would be a terrible monster of a father who would

CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS

Each *BSN* issue chronicles *current* understanding. Nothing less, nothing more. We do not attempt to pass ourselves off as those to whom the Lord has given "special revelation." We are as fallible as other men, but we do have the God-given faith to change our understandings as we see the truth revealed to us by the Lord. We simply love the truth – even at the expense of admitting being wrong every now and then.

Over the years we have made a continuous transition out of a religious system responsible for propagating many "un-truths." I am sure that we are not done, so our *current* understanding is *always* liable to change and adjustment as further light and understanding from the Scriptures are received. This means that the more current issues of the *BSN* always contain our most recent understanding of scriptural issues.

NO CREEDS; NOTHING TO JOIN

We are not bound to creeds, doctrinal statements, traditions, personalities or human organizations. Although we may be very interested in what direction a sincere truth-seeker has taken in his personal studies, we are bound simply and solely to the Scriptures alone.

We are not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship." We belong to the Lord – and this is enough for us.

THANK YOU!

I want to thank each of you who, over the years, have fellowshiped and communicated with us through the means of the *BSN*. I personally count it an ongoing honor and privilege to be able to share with you each week studies that are of importance to me. I trust that God will use this as encouragement to you in your walk with Him.

Until next week, my love to you!

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

punish his children forever, especially if it only took a short moment for the child to repent. So, you can either accept a God of love Who strives for the bettering of His children, or you can accept a monster of a god who created a world full of people just to torture almost all of them forever – but believing in both is contradictory.

Contrasting Doctrines

Eternal Conscious Torment and Infinite Love

by — Aaron Locker

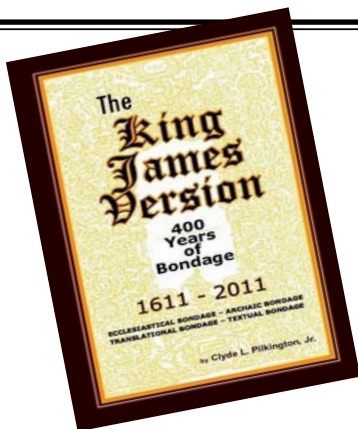
The compatibility (or lack thereof) of popular, supposedly scriptural doctrines has been interesting me for a while. I will compare and contrast a couple of doctrines that are commonly held by Christians, and examine whether it is possible to hold both of the doctrines as true at the same time.

Here we have two doctrines that a majority of the Christian world believes. Firstly, they believe that not only is God loving, not only is He eternally loving, but that He is love. I agree with this. I believe that love is not only the most prominent natural trait of God which will always be the foundation of His decisions and plans, but that God can be summed up with one word: "Love." God's love is forever. It won't wear out, it won't seek after its own good; and as sin abounds, God's love in grace will abound much more.

Secondly, we have the doctrine of Eternal Conscious Torment. This doctrine teaches that those who die in this lifetime without accepting Christ as their Savior will spend **ETERNITY** in the afterlife being tormented. Now, this torment isn't just being forced to watch commercials for ever; no, this is torment that even the sickest human mind couldn't imagine. This torment

will make Hitler look like a saint. You and your loved ones will be put into a bottomless pit filled with fire. You will scream and beg for death as will your mother, your children and plenty of other people you love who wouldn't believe. You will even be able to smell your mother's flesh burning. You will want to die, but you won't be able to do so. Eventually, God will dump you and the majority of creation into a place that makes hell look like Disney Land - The Lake of Fire. Here you will swim around in fire so hot that it is liquid and you will never find land. Birds will come and pluck out your eyes. You will spend most of your time trying to stop people from using your children as flotation so that they can have a couple of seconds out of the lake.

Sick, isn't it? The same people who believe that God is love also believe in a place so terrible that, even when talked about, it makes you cry. The worst part about this is that our eternally loving God apparently created these places. His perfect plan that He made before the beginning of the world was that He would send an overwhelming majority of His creation into this unbelievably terrible torment to stay there forever. The amount of time that these people will be tortured will
(see *CONTRASTING*, page 2883)



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1611-2011

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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