



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIV
Issue 331

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

What We Learn from the Costa Concordia

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In the largest passenger ship loss since the Titanic, 33 of the 4,252 passengers and crew of the *Costa Concordia* perished. The captain of the ship was arrested on preliminary charges, including manslaughter.

Despite the fact that some 99.2% were saved, it remains a tragic loss of life. Every life on board the ship was of unique value, and their individual death a great tragedy.

Just the other day, my dear friend and brother, Jim Burson, shared with me an astute illustration spawned by this cruise ship incident.

There was a large passenger ship with a thousand people on it. The captain assembled all passengers and announced to them, "The ship is about to sink, but I have 'Good News.' Fifty of you will be able to make it to dry land."

This is the "Good News" of traditionalism, but I contend that it is not "Good News" at all. For the nine hundred and fifty who are about to perish, it certainly is not "Good News." For those fifty who will not perish, it is not "Good News," because they likely will leave behind children, wives and husbands. Most of all it is not "Good News" to the captain because he knows it was his responsibility to assure the well-being of his passengers.

Here is what we learn from the *Costa Concordia*: the captain is always responsible for *his* ship – and *all* under his care. Any loss is unacceptable, even .8%. This is even truer concerning the Sovereign of the Universe. He is responsible for all He has made – for His entire creation – and He emphatically declares Himself to be the "Savior of all men" (I Timothy 4:10).

In effectually discharging His responsibility God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to "take away the sin of the



world" (John 1:29), proclaiming Him to be the actual "Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

In spite of all of this, Christianity has the faithless audacity to bring an indictment against God: the *vast majority* of His creation will be eternally lost, and His Son will utterly fail, being guilty Himself of dereliction of responsibility of His Saviorhood.

Our Lord Jesus Christ "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), and He Who leaves the 99, tirelessly and unflinchingly will "go after that which is lost, until He finds it" (Luke 15:4). Some of Christianity would have the nerve to suggest that only a fraction will eventually be saved. However, if Christ's *rate* of salvation was that of the *Costa Concordia's* – 99.2% – He would be an utter failure, as He was not declared to be the "Savior of 99.2% of the world," but the "Savior of the world."

Salvation is not the responsibility of the crew or passengers, but of Salvation's Captain (the "Captain of their salvation" – Hebrews 2:10, KJV) – the successful "Savior of the WORLD." He, and He alone, will see to its full and complete accomplishment. The Good News is that the ship *Salvation* is in unwaveringly capable hands. Father and His Son are in absolute control.

Rest, and enjoy the cruise. ■

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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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Theological Evolutionist

Who Is the Creator of Evil?

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

We only condemn ourselves as theological evolutionists when we trace sin back to a creature and refuse to acknowledge the Creator. Many who do not spare the shortsightedness of science and condemn its labored efforts to banish God from His Own universe are practicing the same deception when confronted with the origin of sin ...



the universe, or was it due to an error on His part?

If God created Satan perfect and his defection was a surprise and a disappointment to God, then there is no use in hiding behind mere words. He failed. He started out to make a flawless creature who turned out bad.

There is no one else to charge with this failure but God. Yet this is all wrong, *for God never fails, or sins.*

Current Miltonian effusions regarding Satan's primeval perfection and his subsequent fall are not to be found anywhere in the Word of God.

From the beginning is the Adversary sinning (I John 3:8)

We have, then, a creature, called an Adversary and Satan, and to him the Scriptures trace back all sin. Our inquiry is now narrowed down to the question [about] whether this one is really a creature, or self-created – in fact, another god, such as the Zoroastrian religion worshipped. If he is not self-existent we are shut up to his creation by the hand of God ...

Sin has an essential, though transient, part in God's purpose. God made due preparation for it before it came. The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Creation may reveal some aspects of God's power and wisdom, but His love can be displayed only where sin has sown the seed of hate. There can be no Savior apart from sin. There can be no reconciliation apart from enmity.

God locks up all together in stubbornness that He should be merciful to all (Romans 11:32).

Was it God's intention that sin should have invaded

Excerpt from:

The Problem of Evil and the Judgments of God ■

WHY WE WERE BORN SINNERS

We can't know love, unless we know hatred. We can't know peace, unless we know war. We can't know life, unless we know death. We can't experience reconciliation, unless we know alienation. And, we can never know the love of God unless we, as sinners, see God sending His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to die for our sins. In other words, we can't know God as our Savior unless we're sinners. We have a past, we have a tarnished history. This is why Adam in the Garden of Eden never uttered a word of praise or appreciation. He didn't know adversity, sin and suffering. He had no history to contrast. This is why we are born sinners and live in a world of corruption and violence: so that we can have evil in our history, so that, when it's all over, we can have real fellowship with God and with each other! History is the most important ingredient in God's purpose.

— Daniel Sheridan

Not Already Perfected

by — Peter Feddema

Not that I already obtained, or am already perfected (Philippians 3:12).

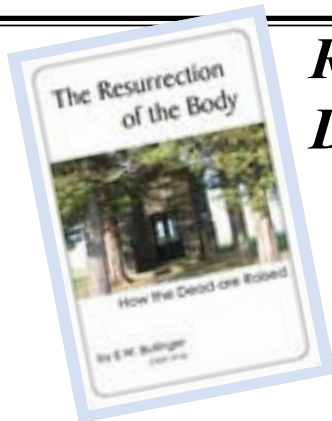
Our imperfections in the flesh can be a real spoiler of spiritual joy. Our awareness of not perfectly measuring up to the standard set before us by Paul to walk worthily of the calling with which we were called is often overpowering. As a consequence, the peace of God does not always fill our hearts and minds. How do we cope with this? We will give twelve points which we hope will be helpful in “*endurance and patience with joy*” (Colossians 1:11).¹

1. As long as we are here in our terrestrial tabernacle, we know that God is not finished fashioning and framing us. From Colossians 1:12 we learn that our heavenly Father is making us competent for the allotment awaiting us. Thus, let us not run ahead of Him, but let us be gracious with others and ourselves.
2. For reasons best known to God, we have been given only an earnest of His holy spirit and not as yet a full measure. How good and encouraging to know that we also have been sealed with the holy spirit of promise for the day of deliverance (Ephesians 1:13;

4:30). Furthermore, we have not been given a full measure of faith, but a limited measure (Romans 12:3). Some receive more than others. That is one reason why we should never compare ourselves with ourselves (II Corinthians 10:12), but be as helpful and lenient as can be, without being presumptuous or condescending. We are all objects of God’s grace.

3. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11 that he had learned to be content. This means to us that Paul was not born with that blessing, but that in the “school of God” he had learned it. Some of us may not learn it until the last day in “school.” Paul learned a very important lesson spoken of in II Corinthians 12:9. We are thankful for the many precious declarations given in this administration of grace, but we should be especially grateful for the one given to Paul when he had earnestly prayed for the removal of an infirmity (imperfection). Paul simply was told, “*Sufficient for you is My grace.*” This might be called one of the understatement of the eons. What more and what better can be granted to us in our infirmities than knowing that we have been saved by grace and in grace (that is, into the sphere of grace). As a fish in the ocean encounters water always, in all of

1. Scriptures used throughout are from the *Concordant Literal Translation*.



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(+ \$3.99 S&H = \$13.94)

Resurrection of the Body, The: How the Dead Are Raised

by — E.W. Bullinger

The Bible has much to say about the resurrection of the body. In fact it is the hope of each and every believer in Christ – as Paul wrote in Philippians 3:20-21. That being the case, what does the Bible say about The Resurrection of the Body? When will this resurrection take place? How are they raised? With what bodies? These, and many other questions, Bullinger answers with his usual thorough and accurate handling of the Bible.

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its movements, so we, in all of our experiences in “school” encounter God’s grace in Christ Jesus no matter how many imperfections we still have.

4. Since we will never come in this life to that degree of perfection that will allow us to say with honesty that we practice flawlessly the standard set before us, it is very helpful to consider what Peter, as a disciple, experienced when he was granted permission to walk on the water toward Jesus (Matthew 14:27-33). As long as he kept his eyes focused on His Lord, he was successful. When he looked at the billowing waves, he became afraid and began to sink. Of course, Jesus saved him. One important lesson to learn from Peter’s experience is to keep our focus on the truth as it was revealed to Paul by our glorified Lord and Savior. The truth will be making us free also from the frustrations of our imperfections.
5. Yes, as we walk on the stormy sea of life (perhaps too many times with a sinking feeling), we would heed Paul’s entreaty, “Do not worry about anything” (Philippians 4:6). That includes not worrying about the fact that we are not as yet perfect. How may we accomplish this? Simply by keeping in mind that because of the death of Christ we will be presented holy and flawless and unimpeachable in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22). This is a powerful way to cope with such shortcomings as fear and worry, or anything else that tends to make us aware of our imperfections.
6. Someone has said that we must never look back “when trying to plow a straight furrow.” For spiritual maturity it is very important not to look back on any successes or any failures we have experienced. This does not mean to be dishonest and to pretend that we are capable through mental acrobatics to remove from our memory past experiences, good and bad. No, it simply means not to live by our experiences and feelings, but to let God’s declarations concerning His grace in Christ and His operation in this administration of grace determine our daily walk and feelings.
7. While we are in this tabernacle of flesh, we need to comprehend the meaning of what Paul says when he uses the word “reckoning” in Romans 6:11.

Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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Now, since “sin” means “missing the mark,” then we have here a basis for not looking at our failures. The standing, or position we have with God is secure in Christ Jesus, and since nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31-35), we have very much to encourage us to live by God’s success in Christ Jesus.

8. Sometimes we wonder what would happen if God granted us complete maturity and mastery over the flesh at this time. Would it not make us difficult to live with? Just suppose that, for instance, we could tell another that we never worry about anything anymore. Would that not sound conceited and unreal? Would that not make us walk about with an air of self-righteousness? How wonderful and humbling to realize that we are given God’s righteousness in Christ Jesus in Whom we are instructed to boast (I Corinthians 1:31).
9. It is more realistic to pursue joyfully that for which we have been grasped. Paul said it so well in Philipians 3:12-14.

Not that I already obtained, or am already perfected. Yet I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by ►

Christ Jesus. Brethren, not as yet am I reckoning myself to have grasped, yet one thing – forgetting, indeed, those things which are behind, yet stretching out to those in front – toward the goal am I pursuing for the prize of God’s calling above in Christ Jesus.

In this passage Paul plainly acknowledges that he does not consider himself to be perfect. He also states that he is not dwelling on those things that are behind him. Is it not interesting that (as mentioned above under #3) Paul, nevertheless, has learned to be content? He is content because he revels in the truths of justification, conciliation and glorification (in spirit he – and we as well – have already been given every spiritual blessing among the celestials in Christ – Ephesians 1:3). He does not allow his imperfections to make him “uptight.” Instead, he is living by the perfection he has in Christ Jesus. This gives him a great amount of energy in the pursuit of grasping and laying hold on eonian life. The marvelous truths he was commissioned to proclaim, plus his constant contact in prayer with the God of all power, wisdom and love, enabled him to live by faith and to cast out frustration. He encouraged us to follow him.

10. The physical conditions of life can, at times, be very trying. We are not asked to become unnatural, but the Scripture says that we do not sorrow as the world does (I Thessalonians 4:13). We do groan, yet our groaning is different from the groaning and moaning that goes on in society. We are entreated to do all without murmurings and reasonings (Philippians 2:14), yet the difficulties of life often cause us tears and sadness while we rejoice in the truth that all is out of, through and for God! We are fully persuaded that all things that are taking place in our lives, and in the billions of other human lives, contribute to the universal goal so succinctly stated in I Corinthians 15:28 – “that God may be All in all.” This must mean that we, as creatures, through the experience of good and evil, have to become nothing in ourselves. Creatures can find true fulfillment and perfect satisfaction only by having the Creator as their All, the Creator Who has revealed Himself as Father, and has told us that we belong to His family (Ephesians 2:19). How good to know that God is establishing a family relationship with His creatures – not a cold business-like relationship, but a relationship of intimacy and love!

11. It is very interesting to read in Hebrews that Christ

learned obedience by the things He suffered. We do not have to learn obedience but we may learn contentment; this while we suffer from many imperfections. It is a great relief that we are “complete in Christ” (Colossians 2:10), and live by His faith (Galatians 2:20). This, indeed, is more than enough to help us forget our own shortcomings, and to be invigorated for positive living. This positive living is to be understood not merely as being free from worry (although that is very important), but to rejoice in serving the Lord and to remember that the Lord is always near. The more we rejoice in the Lord the less we worry in our imperfections. That it is important to rejoice is clearly indicated in Philippians 4:4,

Be rejoicing in the Lord always! Again, I will declare, be rejoicing!

as well as in Romans 15:13,

Now may the God of expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing, for you to be superabounding in expectation, in the power of holy spirit.

12. We feel it is very important to keep in mind that the Great Potter is ultimately the One Who will achieve all of these commendable qualities in us. In Ephesians 2:10 it says that we are His achievement. In Philippians 2:13 it clearly states that God is

Operating in us to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight.

Isn’t it marvelous to know that it all depends on Him to what degree we succeed? This knowledge is invigorating and of tremendous importance in terms of a worthy walk. This helps us to avoid indulging in too much introspection or “navel-gazing.” Let us look up, for our deliverance is drawing near!

May these twelve points help us to cope victoriously with the “painful” awareness of not always being perfectly able to walk worthily, to banish worrying, and to bask in the peace of God. These points, of course, are not given as an excuse for our imperfections. On the contrary, we hope that a proper reading of these may be of great help in becoming more involved in pursuing the goal of walking worthily, in the spirit of contentment and true rejoicing in full appreciation of the perfection we have in Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord. ■



Reader's Question Box #11

“Unto the third and fourth generation”

Visiting¹ the depravity² of the fathers on the sons, on the third and on the fourth generation, to those hating Me (Exodus 20:5).



Q: Why does God make children suffer for the sins of their ancestors?

A: The idea that God makes children suffer for the guilt of their ancestors has deep *theological* roots (i.e., “inherited guilt”), but contradicts the plain Scriptural truth that,

Children are NOT to be put to death for their fathers (Deuteronomy 24:16; cf. II Chronicles 25:4).

The text of Exodus 20:5 stands in a concrete, historical context. The people of Israel were on their way to the “promised land” and would be driving out the inhabitants of that land.

The question arises, But why now? Had God not already, four centuries ago, promised this land to the descendants of Abraham? Why was it necessary that first, for so many years, the people of Israel had to suffer oppression? Why was the land not directly given as a possession? The answer to these questions was given, centuries earlier, to the then-childless Abram:

You shall come to your forefathers in peace, and be entombed at a good grey-haired age. And in the fourth generation they shall return hither, for the depravity of the Amorites is not yet full (Genesis 15:15-16).

1. The Hebrew word *paqad* does not mean “pay” (as is sometimes suggested), but “visiting” or “seek for.”
2. The Hebrew word *avon* does not mean “iniquity” (as is sometimes suggested), but “depravity.”

In other words, when the Israelites entered the promised land, God executed judgment on the inhabitants of the land. This was not because of the depravity of their ancestors, but because they had *persisted* in the depravity of their ancestors. Only at the fourth generation was Israel to clear the land. Not any earlier. This demonstrates how *slow* God is in the execution of His judgment. Carrying out judgment is strange work for Him and never an end in itself.

Indeed, though He afflicts, yet He has compassion according to the abundance of His benignities; for He does not humiliate from His heart or so afflict the sons of humanity (Lamentations 3:32-33).

Exodus 20:5 is not evidence of God’s vindictiveness, but of His patience!

by — Andre Piet



The Problem of Evil and The Judgments Of God

by — A.E. Knoch

#3850, 346 pp, PB, \$15.95
(+ \$3.99 S&H = \$19.94)

This book traces the divine function of evil from its inception to its consummation, by presenting scriptural solutions to the various long-debated questions concerning God and His sovereignty. Here is what one of our readers has written about *The Problem of Evil*:

“The litmus test for motive in any writer is whether or not the power of the ‘Cross’ is being diminished or supplanted in any way; Knoch unfolds each point with the loving simplicity of someone who has faced and answered the critics with the overarching victory of Calvary. One comes away from each chapter of this work once again realizing that the offense of the ‘Cross’ has driven so many wonderful and freeing truths out of what is traditionally taught and practiced.”



It was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but now I am free to learn what is truth and what is error. I have learned much from the book *Daily Goodies – 365 Thoughts on Spiritual Truths*. – **WA**

URQA.com is a brilliant website. Thanks so much for it. Am daily blessed by its content. – **Philippines**

You have comforted my “travail in the midst of **evil**” by unselfishly holding forth God’s **good**. Thank you for sharing them with me. – **IN**

How much I enjoy the messages sent to you from the members of Christ’s Body around the globe. I hear the love they have for Father and I feel as though we are all loving Him together – at the same time. This warms me and makes me feel the connection that we all have as “one” in Christ Jesus. Love must be our spiritual bond and singleness as the Body.

Thank you for always keeping the Lord’s ways fresh in our minds. At a time, it seems, when those whose internet sites were once fresh with the truth [but now have] become stagnant, you keep bringing these truths to our attention every day, giving us truth from writers from the past as well as those of today. Keep up the good work brother; you are pouring blessings on all who open their inboxes every day. – **Canada**

This special “love” that is growing in us and among us must be the “charge” that Paul sent with Timothy to the ecclesia. For me, I Timothy 1:5 says that the goal of all of Paul’s instruction was to grow our love for the Father and the Son and the Body from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith.

How I thank God that He allowed me to see the glory of His love, grace, purposes and victory through the life and death of Jesus His son and my Lord! I am so grateful for the opportunity to feast and fellowship at sites like *BibleStudentsNotebook.com* – **WY**

As I read from your emails, your ministry has helped many to grow and mature in Christ the same way you have helped me and are continuing to do so. To be enabled to sincerely love Father in return, is the blessing of blessings. Thank you for your part. – **LA**

Your ministry is the best thing going! – **MN**

I came out of a very controlled church after 40 years. ■



Church Epistles, The (Romans to Thessalonians)

by — E.W. Bullinger

If you enjoyed this week’s article, you will certainly want to read the in-depth study of the subject of Paul’s *Church Epistles* written by E.W. Bullinger. It is a must read!

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