



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XIV  
Issue 335

# Victory over the Vain Cycle of Labor

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Labor is a key component of life. Mankind incessantly participates in its vanity. King Solomon spoke concerning this:

*Vanity of vanities; all is vanity ... What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides. The sun also arises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where he arose ... All things are full of labor ... (Ecclesiastes 1:2-6, 8).*



which can be only from the divine standpoint: “*your labor is NOT IN VAIN in the Lord*” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Those of us who know Father as the great Planner and Director of our days have a completely different approach to labor. Instead of being human and vain, it is divine and meaningful. It is HE who transforms futility into value, emptiness into fullness, and the mundane into the divine. For us, all things – even the apparent routine and commonplace – become the significant sphere of the divine.

When Solomon writes of vanity, he speaks of emptiness, meaninglessness, pointlessness, purposelessness and futility – that relentless cycle of others who lived prior to us, and of those who will live after we are gone.

We have work laid before us each day, but our work is so much more than a way of making a living: it is God living out His life in us. Ultimately HE is our employer; we really work for Him and His Son.

Why is labor so vain? The answer is really quite simple; it is because we have been so subjected by our Creator.

... *The creature was subjected to vanity ... (Romans 8:20).*

*Servants, be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatever good thing any man does, he shall receive the same of the Lord, whether he is slave or free (Ephesians 6:5-8).*

“Vanity” is thus the lot of those on earth. The daily alarm clock and commute ever attest to this fact. Yet, for those of us who trust our Heavenly Father, quite another view of labor can prevail! Instead of our labors being bound to such emptiness, they can rise to heights of divine life.

In this passage Paul speaks to those who have the greatest disadvantage in their labor: slaves. In doing

(see VICTORY, page 3058)

Solomon’s perspective showed the vanity of labor from the purely human viewpoint, “under the sun” – a vantage-point apart from God. However, Paul, our apostle, gave us a divine perspective, “far above all heavens,” revealing the true purpose found in labor,

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

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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);
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  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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# What a Sovereign God Will Do and Will Achieve

## A Scriptural Refutation of the Belief that Mankind has Been Endowed with a “Free Will.”

by — Peter Feddema

Just a couple of days ago I came across an article with the title, “*What a Sovereign God Cannot Do.*” In brief, the author’s theology centered on the basic assumption that God created man with an absolute “free will”! This popular theology makes God, and the perfect sacrifice of Christ, dependent on man exercising his will in such a manner that it will be possible for God to save a relative few! The article makes a strong plea for such a proposition, but is it in accord with Scripture in which God has revealed His plan and purpose, especially through the Apostle Paul?

It is my intention to show, from Scripture, that God does not, in the least, depend on any of His wayward creatures in order to save everyone!

We have been admonished to obey the injunction to “*rightly divide the Word of Truth*” (II Timothy 2:15)! Neglecting to do so will leave us feeling ashamed with respect to God’s ways and ultimate objective.

Through the Apostle Paul, God revealed that He “*will have all mankind to be saved and to come to the knowledge [realization] of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4). As can be easily verified, the Greek word here used is *thelo*, which really means “will,” and not the weaker word “desires,” although, who can thwart what God really desires? To be sure, it is God’s expressed *will* to save all mankind and to have each individual come to the deep realization of His truth! The Greek word here translated as mere knowledge is *epignosis*, and signifies “having a precise and thorough *realization*, or *recognition*, of divine truth.”

In I Timothy 4:9-11 it is empathically and reliably stated that God is the Savior of *all* mankind. Paul,

under inspiration, wanting to make sure that we understand that all mankind is in view, added, “*especially of those who believe.*” Indeed, believers – the elect – have a prior and special salvation, but *not an only and exclusive salvation*, because Paul did not write, “*exclusively of those who believe.*” He considered this to be so important that, in verse 11, he added, “*These things command and teach!*”

We also learn from Romans 5:18-19 that, as condemnation came on all mankind through Adam’s disobedience, so justification will come on all mankind through Christ’s obedient sacrifice!

Then, in I Corinthians 15:22 we read, “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*” We know that this refers to life beyond the reach of death. The next verse makes that clear.

Furthermore, in Colossians 1:20 it is made known that all in heaven and all in earth will become reconciled to God through the blood of the cross!

Romans 11:32 tells us, “*For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.*” In this verse, God does not hesitate to state that disobedience and stubbornness is on all of humanity from His hand for the purpose that He may, eventually, be showering His mercy on all.

Moreover, in I John 2:2, it unequivocally states, “*And He [Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

Since the sacrifice of Christ (His suffering and death on the cross) was made for the sins of the whole world (the whole human race), is it conceivable ►

that it will not have its positive effect on all mankind? Are we to accept that the perfect and supreme sacrifice will leave the great majority of humanity unaffected and to fall into the possession of Satan for all time? This neither harmonizes with Scripture, nor with basic common sense! Intuitively, we know that there is something seriously amiss if such will be true. It makes one think of a scenario where a wealthy, strong, rich aristocrat pays *in full* for a hundred acre farm, but has to settle for receiving, to possess, only five acres because of a nasty neighbor who, craftily and crookedly, manages to take possession of 95 acres. Even among wayward humanity, such would be recognized as a great injustice, since the nasty neighbor did not pay even a penny for anything!

The article made much about God having given humanity a “free will.” This is most regrettable, because the words “free will” are not a scriptural expression. Of course, God created us with a will, and thankfully so, but our will is merely a human will that is dependent on receiving the *special gift* of God’s Spirit (Romans 5:5) in order to utilize God’s *special gift* of faith (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29) These special gifts enable us to exercise our will in response to God’s love! Once they are graciously given, the human will *will* respond, positively, to the Giver of all (I Corinthians 4:7; John 3:27), just as

readily as our physical eyes and ears do see and hear, and we respond!

It is emphatically declared that not a single, solitary thing that we have, whether it is physical or spiritual, is anything other than a gift from God! When we ask, “Where in Scripture is it stated that God gave us a ‘free will’?” we see that there is no such revelation. If anything, Scripture and history unmistakably show that carnal, willful humanity is incapable of seeking after God – in fact, it is at enmity with God!

Do we consider it meaningful to protest, and to complain, that we have not had any say in the matter as to how our physical body has been created to function? Why, then, should we protest and complain about being dependent on the special gift of God’s Spirit and the special gift of faith in order to respond positively to our Creator God? Only after we have received these special gifts from God will there be a positive response! Scripture reveals that as long as we are still in the School of God, we have these gifts only in measure and not in full. This, evidently, is for our benefit in order to learn essential lessons while still in this body of humiliation! These special gifts are not given to enable us to show what *we* are capable of so that *we* can qualify for entrance into God’s family (Ephesians 2:19). Anything physical or spiritual that would place into the hands of the in-



### ***After the Thousand Years: The Glorious Reign of Christ as Son of Man in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times***

by — George F. Trench (1841-1915)

In Revelation 20 the closing period of the Millennium is foretold as one of general insurrection against Christ as King, thus revealing the true condition of the population of the world, taken as a whole, throughout the thousand years. A Kingdom such as this cannot be the KINGDOM described in the epistles of Paul. According to I Corinthians 15:24, our Lord will not reign forever, but will deliver up His mediatorial KINGDOM to God at its end, that God will henceforth be “All in all.” If the reign of Christ in its perfection cannot be millennial, and shall not be eternal, it follows that between the end of the one, the millennial, and the beginning of the other, the eternal state, must of necessity intervene that “dispensation of the fullness of times” (Ephesians 1:10), that KINGDOM of the Son of God’s love, that KINGDOM that cannot be shaken, which it is Christ’s to enjoy as Heir of all things, and Head of the new creation.

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dividual the power to determine his eternal well or woe is unscriptural, and robs God of His glory and honor, and would, effectively, make it so that God cannot become ALL even in one person, let alone in everybody such as is the Father's expressed objective (I Corinthians 5:28).

In Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11, God said that He would not give His glory and praise to another! Why, then, should we assume that He gave to humanity a so-called "free will" in order to show Him whether or not to save this or that person? Again, such would most effectively rob God of His honor, glory and praise, and place it within the heart of each saved individual to feel, eternally, good about himself for having had the savvy to, wisely and ingeniously, make the right decisions, in contrast to the billions who stupidly ended up in hell to regret, forever, their folly and shortsightedness!

When we enjoy having good eye sight, we do not feel that we have been reduced to robots because God did not leave it up to us to have functional eyes and to enjoy what we see! So it is when we receive the special gifts of God's Spirit and faith! We, then, irresistibly and thankfully respond to God in love, in faith, and in expectation!

Permit me for a moment to focus on what Scripture really reveals about the fruits of the *will* of humanity, as it stems from Adam! It is totally at loggerheads with God's will! This is made undeniably clear in Romans 3:10-20, where we are summarily told that not one is just, no, not even one, not one understands, not one seeks after God, all avoid Him, not one is doing good, no not one, etc.

Romans 3:10-20 conclusively shows us what humanity is all about, when it is not blessed with the gift of God's Spirit and the gift of faith! Yes, these horrifying and humbling negatives are the product of man's innate will. Since no one is inclined to seek after God, or do any good (worth mentioning), it is evident that humanity, left to itself, is hopelessly lost.

However, we know that all which Paul penned from Romans 1:18 to Romans 3:20 is an introduction to the marvelous revelation found in Romans 3:21-28! This introduction could not more bleakly paint hu-

manity's insurmountable problem than it does. It is the foil for the revelation of *God's complete and glorious solution* to humanity's problem!

Immediately following the spelling out of mankind's desperate, dreadful and death-doomed problem, we read, "*But now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is revealed through the faith of Jesus Christ!*" In :22, it clearly says that this righteousness is *for all mankind*, but is, presently and especially, only *on the* believers, who were chosen before any humans were on earth (Ephesians 1:4). The rest will also be receiving the full benefit of Christ's sacrifice when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father (I Corinthians 15:24-28). Our Lord and Savior will most gloriously succeed in presenting a spotless and flawless universe to His God and Father. The context of I Corinthians 15:20-28 (plus many other Scriptures) leaves us no other conclusion.

As all-inclusive as the painful revelations were concerning humanity in Romans 3:10-20, so all-inclusive is the solution for all of humanity as it is revealed in the following verses (21-28) of this same chapter!

Since the Good News of God's solution to man's insuperable problem is announced under the heading, "*apart from law,*" why should we make the effect of the great and perfect sacrifice of Christ dependent on *a law of mankind's so-called "free will"*? The work and sacrifice of Christ, the gift of God's Spirit, as well as the gift of faith, are not provided in order that each individual may have another chance to show how good and worthy he can present himself to God and qualify to receive the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ! No; if anything, all of this is to show each individual his complete and total dependence on God for everything – everything physical and spiritual, everything temporal or eternal! Through Christ's sacrifice, the heart of God – the love of God – is revealed! It is not provided as an opportunity whereby each may show his own ability and, thereby, qualify to be a recipient of salvation. Our competence is solely of God (Colossians 1:12).

It may also be said that on the level of humanity's consciousness, it *feels* as if we have a free will – but that is on *our* level of awareness and according to *our* feelings, which are not the yardstick for truth! On ►

the contrary, they are the yardstick of our waywardness and wrong conclusions.

In Romans 9:16 we are plainly told that it is not of him who "wills" or "runs," but of God the Merciful! As I have shown from Romans 11:32, God will have mercy on *all*, and for that purpose He has blinded them first! Paul, on realizing all of that, broke forth into one of Scripture's most eloquent, heart-touching doxologies, ending it with the jubilant shout that All is FOR God (Romans 11:33-36).

In fact, if salvation and abiding condemnation for any individual depends on the individual exercising his will properly, or not exercising his will properly, then those who will not be saved have themselves to blame, and those who will be saved have themselves to pat on the back and to take sole credit for having escaped hell!

According to popular theology, they (the saved ones) cannot but help, for all eternity, remembering and being conscious of the fact that the difference between them and the massive bulk of humanity (those in hell) is that they have exercised their so-called free and independent will wisely, whereas the great majority has exercised their so-called free and independent will stupidly!

Since, ever so thankfully, it completely depends on God and on the Son of His Love (and not on humanity), all will, indeed, be saved. This will be so, because God in His infinite love and mercy will overcome evil with good! Will He not do, Himself, what He has instructed us to do (Romans 12:21)? Of course He will, now that the righteousness of God has been fully satisfied in the sacrifice of Christ! (Romans 3:21-22; see also Romans 1:17; 5:19, 21; 10:3-4; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9)

There is much more that could be said to support the fact that God *will* save all, but in closing it is necessary to resort to Scripture once more so that we can see that God is not squeamish to acknowledge (for the purpose to save all and to thoroughly educate all; I Timothy 2:4) that He creates evil as well as good (Isaiah 45:7). It is inconceivable and contrary to Scripture that God is to be perceived as trying to salvage a universal accident that got out of control, with the results that most of His intelligent creatures will end up in hell for the sole reason to be tortured and tormented without end! At the same time, those who did get saved have to be on guard so as not to be exceedingly pleased with themselves, but to be humble and thankful to God, whereas within their heart of hearts, they can barely stop from congratulating themselves every day for having been so wise and so good, to have made sure that they live in wonderful



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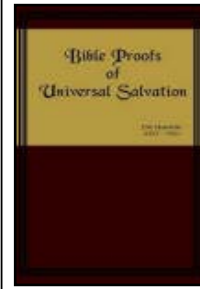
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Yes, I know that many fine people, even dear fellow-believers, are convinced that if they have no *free* will, that such will reduce them to being nothing more than mere automatons and robots! However, let me stress that this idea is nothing but a deceitful red herring, presented to have us divert our attention from where it should be, namely, on the plan and purpose of God, to become *ALL in all* (I Corinthians 15:28).

Never can we overestimate the deep significance of mankind having been created in God's image and in His likeness, designated to become mature sons and "daughters" of our heavenly Father. The fear of being nothing more than automatons and robots would have a basis of truth only if we had been created without a will at all! Then, we would not be human anymore! Then, we would not be creatures that were made in God's image and in His likeness! Please, consider that there is a universe of difference between having a "free" will and having a will. If it is a fact that mankind has a "free" will (with all that it means in popular theology), then God has reduced Himself to a third-rate Deity Who would very much love to save everybody, but Who has made Himself unable to do so even though He has provided in the sacrifice of Christ everything necessary and needful for all to be saved. It is impossible to accept that God has weakened Himself this way by having given His creatures a "free" and "independent" will so that only those who decide to use this will wisely and astutely will be saved!

When we rightly divide God's Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15), we will recognize God's reason for dealing with Israel according to their flesh – to demonstrably show the futility of the flesh – and we will recognize God's purpose in having called Paul to reveal His plan and purpose as to what He will do and will achieve, not because of any goodness in man, but in spite of any weakness or limitation in man! (With respect to this, a pertinent passage to study is I Corinthians 1:26-31).

God is *not* giving man an *opportunity* (a "chance") to show himself worthy of being saved. No, He purposefully has created us so we can, most effectively and ideally, be educated! In due time, each will re-



## ***Bible Proofs of Universal Salvation***

by — J.W. (John Wesley) Hanson

(#2895) 137 pages, PB  
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This work presents Bible proof of universal salvation containing the principle passages of Scripture that teach the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. The author attempts to present the prominent considerations that are contained in the Bible in support of the final redemption of all souls.

ceive the crucial gift of God's Spirit and the gift of faith, with the result that each, with his whole being *will* respond to His love! Yes, indeed, in response each *will* most *willingly* and *enthusiastically* have God to be his *All*, without any imposed coercion and compulsion! God has created us *response-able*, and through His educational program and His gifts will arouse within each intelligent creature a wholehearted love response to His unlimited love!

Certainly, it is exceedingly important that we have a *will!* In fact, it is essential so that God can receive from each of us our wholehearted praise and adoration without us having been forced to do so; but instead, having been given the wherewithal and the education, *we will* respond *willingly*, joyfully and reverently to His love!

Love strongly desires a wholehearted love response! Love also is a "Schemer!" God's creative work and the flawless sacrifice of Christ are the perfect expressions of His heartfelt love – for God is love (I John 4:8, 16). This undeniable love of God *will* be crowned with complete success in that it *will*, eventually, draw forth from every intelligent creature a *wholehearted voluntary* love response! God has created all that He has made for that purpose! It is the greatest love story, hardly known and believed!

Yes, how extraordinarily wonderful that we do not have to theorize about "*What a Sovereign God Cannot Do*," but that instead, we may revel and rejoice in "*What a Sovereign God Will Do and Will Achieve*," according to His Own revelation of His plan and purpose! ■



VICTORY (continued from front page)

so, he covered the most extreme working conditions so that we would know that *all* labor – no matter how difficult, no matter how taxing – can be done “*as to the Lord, and not to men*” – “*whether he is slave or free.*”

*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men* (Colossians 3:17, 23).

*Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31).

Work done for the Lord is honorable. One occupation is no higher or more pleasing to God than another. All work has meaning when it is done for Him. The life of God in us makes all things sacred. We must not confuse what we do to make a living with the purpose of our lives. Our occupations are just the context in which we carry out our divine calling. The circumstances of our earthly labors are but the backdrop of God’s working in our lives. They are the stage of the Master Workman.

We have been called into “full-time” ministry in the context of our personal daily life. Every area and every aspect of our lives belong to Him. No matter

what the circumstances of life are around us, regardless of what earthly occupations we may use to supply our needs and those of others, we have a divine vocation to which we have been called.

*Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called* (Ephesians 4:1).

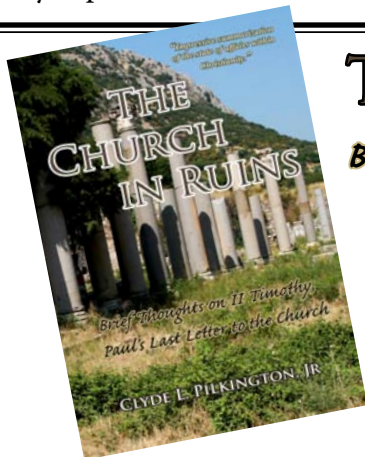
More often than not, the context of our labor can have the appearance of a monotonous, daily routine; but the very life of God running its full course in our day-by-day circumstances will make our lives anything but monotonous and routine.

We considered a portion of Romans 8:20 at our start – that God’s creation has been subjected to vanity – but now let’s read it all.

*For the creature was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who has **sub-jected the same in hope*** (Romans 8:20).

A work done for the Lord is *anything* except vain, for not only did our Creator subject us to vanity, but to hope – a confident expectation!

*Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that **your labor is NOT in vain in the Lord*** (I Corinthians 15:58).



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