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Volume XV
Issue 357

Growing in the Realization of God

Part 2 of 2

by — Robert McMahon

Let us look at three instances of God's dealings with mankind which seem to hinder a proper recognition of His Deity.

THE EXAMPLE OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

Much has been written concerning Judas Iscariot. God's dealings with Judas, from a human standpoint, do not always appear just. Many attempts have been made to relieve God of the responsibility for Judas' betrayal of Christ and make Judas responsible for his own actions.¹ This, perhaps, is a noble gesture on man's part, for it seeks to remove the burden of injustice from God and place it on man. Yet, was God unjust in His dealings with Judas?

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? (Genesis 18:25).

I dare say that all actions to clear Him of responsibility in this case, by giving Judas a "free will," have done more to cloud the realization of God than almost any other single instance. Let us examine some facts.

Judas was chosen as one of the twelve disciples of Christ (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). He came away to the chief priests, *"that he might be giving Him [Christ] up to them"* (Mark 14:10). So important was this action to the Adversary that Satan himself entered into Judas to ensure the accomplishment of the evil (Luke 22:3).

Jesus identified Judas as the one who would give Him up when He dipped the morsel and handed it to Judas at the Passover supper (John 13:26).

Finally, Judas gave up the Son of Mankind in Gethsemane, betraying Him with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48). Later, Judas killed himself on a freehold which he had purchased, *"with the wages of injustice"* (Acts 1:18). A tragic story, yet easily explained under the guise of Judas' "free will."

We merely place responsibility on Judas' choice, but what of God's choice?

God chose the original twelve disciples through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus says,

"Do not I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is an adversary?" Now He said it of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, for this man was about to give Him up, being one of the twelve (John 6:70-71:1).

Did Jesus choose Judas, knowing that he would give Him up? We acknowledge the possibility that John, writing after the fact, may be exhibiting hindsight in this matter concerning Judas, and that, though Christ knew that one of the twelve would betray Him, He did not know at that time which one was the actual adversary. For the moment, responsibility remains on Judas, but John 6:64 clearly states that Jesus,

Perceived from the beginning who those are who are not believing, and who it is that gives Him up.

Now consider this new light. Jesus knew from the beginning – from the time of His choosing the twelve – that Judas was the one who would betray Him. This reveals a strange series of events. The One we call Savior refuses – or at least neglects – to save. He does absolutely nothing to deter Judas from the evil deed he is to perform. In fact, when the moment of betrayal actually arrives, Jesus says to him,

(see *REALIZATION*, page 3219)

1. It should be pointed out that responsibility is really a non-scriptural theme. It is, however, a prevalent theological theme. It is considered here only because many ideas and theories concerning Judas' life have evolved from it, and these thoughts generally hinder a realization of God.

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- 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);
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REALIZATION (continued from front page)

What you are doing, do more quickly (John 13:27).

He did not attempt to stop Judas; He practically encouraged him to do it – and to do it more quickly!

Suddenly things begin to seem unfair. God has a bigger role here than thought, but His reasons for His dealings with Judas are clear:

Fulfilled must be the Scripture in which the holy spirit said before through the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who becomes the guide of those apprehending Jesus, seeing that he was numbered among us, and chanced upon the allotment of this dispensation (Acts 1:16-17).

For the sake of the truth of the Scriptures, Judas had to give up Jesus. For the sake of redemption, it was absolutely necessary that Judas betray the Christ.

Now, do we conclude from this that God is unjust? May it not be coming to that! God will be merciful to whom-ever He wills to be merciful, and He shall be hardening whomever He wills to be hardening (Romans 9:14-15)!

Has not the Creator of Judas the right to deal with him as He wills? Of course He does, especially when we remember that the judge of all of the earth shall do right! Had we a true recognition of God we would not question His dealings with Judas, nor would we rally behind the unscriptural premise of human responsibility to absolve God of what is really only humanly perceived guilt.

THE CASE OF JACOB AND ESAU

What about the case of Jacob and Esau?

Once again, from a human standpoint, Jacob should have served his older brother. The birthright went to the eldest son, but in this instance God would not hear of it.

The greater shall serve the inferior (Genesis 25:23).

To our misguided sense of what is fair this seems wrong. Furthermore, the deception of Isaac seems dishonest (Genesis 27:18-29), and Esau appears cheated, caught in the middle of a situation over which he has no control.

Why did God love Jacob and hate Esau (Malachi 1:2-3)? Was it something Esau said or did which brought

him such disfavor? Was Jacob such a marvelous man that he should receive such blessings from Yahweh?

On the contrary, the choice had been made before the two were ever born or able to put into practice anything good or bad (Romans 9:11)! We are quick to blame Jacob, and even Rebecca, for this seeming injustice. Yet, who ordered these events to take place at the first? Who was it that stated, “*the greater shall be slaving for the inferior*” (Romans 9:12)?

Can we not see that all of this was done, “*that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling*” (Romans 9:11)?

He Who has formed the purpose has the right to choose those who will bring it to pass, for He alone is capable of making the right choices. Consequently, then, the choice is not of man's will, but of God's (Romans 9:16)! We should revel in this fact, yet many are more prone to justify Esau's hatred of his brother than God's sovereignty in this matter. There is no recognition of God, no realization of His role as Deity. May God graciously grant us to see that only He can make the decisions which will ensure the success of His purpose. There can be no injustice in that!

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH PHARAOH

God's dealings with Pharaoh are perhaps the hardest of all to grasp. Let us outline the events which prompted God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

God had seen the affliction of His people Israel under their Egyptian taskmasters or exactors (Exodus 3:7-8). He commissioned Moses to go before Pharaoh to bring forth the sons of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 3:10). God put many wonders into the hand of Moses that Pharaoh might be convinced to let Israel go, but at the same time God told Moses that He would harden, or more accurately, make Pharaoh's heart steadfast or unyielding so that he would not let them go (Exodus 4:21).

The word *unyielding* reveals much light in this matter. Pharaoh's heart was weak. The first of the plagues which Yahweh sent on the land of Egypt by the hand of Moses would have been more than enough to convince Pharaoh to let them go (Exodus 8:8). Yet this would not accomplish God's purpose,

That you may know that there is no one as Yahweh our Elohim (Exodus 8:10).



Pharaoh did not possess a realization of God. He had to be shown God's power so that the name of God should be published in the entire earth (Romans 9:17-18). For this reason God made Pharaoh's heart steadfast or unyielding so that he would not let Israel go.

Many attempts have been made to show that God did not harden Pharaoh's heart, but that Pharaoh hardened his own. These all disappear in the light of God's initial statement and His repeated declarations in Exodus 4-14, where over and over again it is stated that it was God Who made Pharaoh's heart unyielding.

All actions on Pharaoh's part, therefore, must be viewed in light of these statements. God's dealings with Pharaoh all pointed to the end that,

My name may be related in the entire earth (Exodus 9:16)!

Pharaoh became an instrument through which the glory of God could be demonstrated. To this end Paul tells us that to whom He will, He is merciful, yet whom He will, He is hardening. The end more than justifies the means. There could be nothing more just and right!

God's dealings with Pharaoh should have been a means by which the people of the earth would be brought into a realization of Him. Yet, even today, His saints, when reading of the marvelous wonders brought on Pharaoh, fail to recognize God. Instead, they once again conjure up notions of injustice on His part. The accusations come in many forms and by many voices, but they are all pretty much the same:

Why, then, is He still blaming? For who has withstood His intention (Romans 9:19)?

Paul's reply is not an answer to the question. Rather, it is a declaration of the truth. It should cut us right down to size; it should topple us from our presumptuous pedestals; it should render us prostrate before the Deity!

O man! who are you, to be sure, who are answering again to God (Romans 9:20)?

Had we a realization of Him as God we would not question His methods, nor seek to judge His justice – we would not attempt to usurp His power, nor second-guess His wisdom!

We need to be reminded that God's dealings with the individuals in Romans 9, and elsewhere in His Word, are all

with a view to His ultimate glory. As we shall see in the next article in this series, these vessels of indignation shall receive mercy, and this to the glory of God, the Father.

A realization of the truth of Paul's statement in Romans 9:20 becomes, then, a necessary prelude to our appreciation of that glory.

O, How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! (11:33).

May God graciously grant us a spirit of understanding in the realization of Him Who

Locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all (:32).

THE REALIZATION OF GOD'S PURPOSE

For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation ... (I Corinthians 15:22-24).

A realization of God is impossible apart from a realization of His goal. Man's failure to recognize the end has clouded his apprehension of the means. A clear understanding of the consummation of God's purpose is vital to the realization of Him. May God grant us wisdom and spiritual understanding in the recognition of His glorious goal!

All of God's dealings with man have in view His Own ultimate glory. To this end He makes both the honorable and dishonorable, the vessels adapted for destruction and mercy (Romans 9:21-23). Yet man's reasoning denies God the glory by failing to recognize the consummation of His purpose.

Paul's prayer in the first chapter of Colossians asks that we should be growing in the realization of God. Yet before this, the apostle first requests that we may be filled full with the realization of His will. A recognition of His will is a prerequisite to the recognition of Him. God's will is inseparably linked to His purpose of the eons:

To head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth (Ephesians 1:10).

GOD'S WILL FOR ALL

GOD IS ABLE

This purpose is called the secret of His will (Ephesian 1:9). Notice that His purpose is expressed in the term, "all." Any attempt to limit its scope will result in confusion. The word "all" is defined – or confined, if you will – by the context in which it is used. An examination of the first chapter of Ephesians will reveal no limitations. The "all" includes both those in the heavens and those on the earth. It is *all-inclusive*.

Since His will is directly related to the consummation of His purpose, we would expect it also to be stated in terms of *all*. Indeed, it is. Paul encourages us to pray for *all* mankind – the righteous and the unrighteous – the honorable and the dishonorable – because God wills that *all* mankind be saved and come into the realization of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

God's will reveals Him as the *Savior of all* (I Timothy 4:10); therefore the consummation of His purpose must find Him "All in all"!

Toward *this* end He has provided a Mediator of God and mankind, Christ Jesus, Who gives Himself a correspondent Ransom for *all* (I Timothy 2:5-6). For as in Adam *all* are dying, so in Christ shall *all* be vivified (I Corinthians 15:22). Here, certainly, is a marvelous opportunity to recognize the scope of God's purpose.

Few will question that in Adam *all* must die. We have discussed man's mortality which was inherited from our father, Adam. We are dying creatures who cannot escape death. Truly *all* mankind must die.

However, when we read that in Christ shall *all* be made alive, or vivified (given life beyond the reach of death), we reason that this must be limited to *all of the saved*. Yet let us recognize that it is the same *all*! The passage could be written like this:

As in Adam, ALL are dying ...

In Christ, shall ALL be vivified.

Christ died for *all* so that *all* who die may be made alive in Him!

What a transcendent revelation this is! God's will concerns *all*, His purpose includes *all*, and His goal is to be *ALL* in *all*! These are the facts which underlie His counsels and His dealings with His creatures, and which will result in His ultimate glory.

Perhaps the biggest stumbling block to the realization of this goal by so many is an anemic faith, a faith which doubts that God can actually reach the goal which He has set for Himself.

Yet if we cannot believe God, whom then can we believe (Titus 1:2)? Is anything too marvelous for Yahweh (Genesis 18:14)? To Isaiah He says,

Indeed, I have spoken! Indeed, I will bring it about! I formed. Indeed, I will do it (46:11).

He is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending (Ephesians 3:20)! There should be no doubt that He is able to complete His purpose. What remains is for us to understand how He is accomplishing this glorious goal.

Our text says that all shall be vivified, yet all are not to receive this life at once beyond the reach of death. There is an order to be followed, expressed in the words of our text, "*yet each in his own class*" (I Corinthians 15:23). This, too, is not understood by so many.

THE FIRSTFRUIT AND THE FULL HARVEST

Christ alone has immortality now (I Timothy 6:16). He represents the first class to be vivified. He was the first to receive this life beyond death's reach, and represents the Firstfruit.

The very statement that He is the Firstfruit implies that the full harvest will follow. There are two crops to be reaped in this harvest.

The first includes those who are Christ's in His Presence (Greek: *Parousia*). This class includes God's vessels of mercy whom He calls both out of the Jews and the nations (Romans 9:23-24). This refers to those who are in Christ – both the dead and the living.

However, there is one more crop to be taken in. Their vivification shall bring about the consummation of God's purpose. Christendom has left this class *in the field to rot* – or perhaps to be burned with unextinguishable fire. What will come of God's glory, though, if the harvest is incomplete? How shall He be "All in all" if part of the "all" is lost or excluded?

Vessels adapted for destruction, these enemies, must be placed beneath the feet of the Mediator. Their ►

authority and their power must be nullified (I Corinthians 15:24). Their actions must be judged and righted if God is to fulfill His purpose to head up *all* in the Christ.

Had Christendom a realization of God they would be charging and teaching these things (I Timothy 4:11). He is God of all. His goal – the consummation of His purpose – is expressed in terms of "*all*"!

What a glorious revelation! The vessels of indignation are not forgotten. The stubborn are not ignored. God's purpose will remain incomplete until *all* have been justified (Romans 5:18), reconciled (Colossians 1:20), and vivified (I Corinthians 15:22).

THE REALIZATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Yet, not only will He be the God *of* all, but He shall be *in* all, as well. The major thrust in this study is a realization of God's sovereignty. Hence the great gulf which exists between Creator and creation, Potter and clay, Deity and mankind, has been emphasized.

This gulf, however, is not one of fellowship, nor is it one which denies access. In terms of position and power, He is the Deity, the Supreme, the Creator; but our realization of God would be incomplete without a recognition of Him as Father, also.

REALIZATION THAT THE CREATOR, THE ALMIGHTY GOD, IS OUR FATHER

The term, Father, is a most intimate title which reveals a closeness to God which is the believer's experience now, in spirit, and which will be the experience of all mankind at the consummation. Indeed, the believer has become the very dwelling place of God.

God's holy spirit makes its home in us and we are His holy temple (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). Though once our flesh and the enmity in it separated *us* from fellowship with God, now, in spirit, the practices of the flesh are put to death and we become sons of God.

Furthermore, the title "Father" reveals, as perhaps no other can, the depths of God's love for us. Christ, Whom God calls "*the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13), is the Firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29). As His brothers, we are vivified together, roused, and seated together among the celestials in Christ Jesus.

Why does He do this? For what reason does He raise us to such glorious heights? It is because of the vast love with which He loves us (Ephesians 2:4-6). What a transcendent thought, that our Creator, the Almighty God, should still love such insignificant creatures as us, even as a father loves his children!

We have received the spirit of sonship in which we are crying – even as our Lord Jesus Christ –

Abba Father! (Romans 8:12-15).

A proper recognition of God must include the realization of the glorious blessing which is ours in Christ Jesus, our Lord, through Whom we have access, by faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of our God (Romans 5:2) *and Father*, Who shall be "*ALL in all*."

REALIZATION OF GOD, *ALL* IN *ALL*

Only the realization of this goal will bring Him the glory which is His due. Even our wisdom and false sense of justice cannot prevent its accomplishment.

Death shall be destroyed, the groanings of the creation shall be silenced, and man's protesting and questioning shall cease! What a transcendent thought – the God, out of Whom *all* is, finally *ALL* and in *all*! Then the entire creation will enjoy a realization of Him.

At present, this realization is not universal. May God, our Father, grant us an appreciation of the marvelous privilege which is ours today, by His grace, to grow in the realization of Him!

Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all (I Corinthians 15:28).

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WISDOM

*Therefore we also, from the day on which we hear, do not cease praying for you and requesting that you may be **filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**, you to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in **the realization of God*** (Colossians 1:9-10).

Paul prays for wisdom to realize the wisdom of God's



will and ways. The profound spiritual thoughts of God's Word must become our companion, shaping our own thoughts, clearing our blurred vision and stopped-up ears. We especially need to be praying these prayers of the apostle Paul so that we might perceive the glories of God's grace and be bearing ideal fruit in our lives.

Apart from such a realization, we will often find ourselves protesting the ways of God. The illustration of the potter and the clay is a case in point. We read,

That which is molded will not protest to the molder, "Why do you make me thus?" Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor? (Romans 9:20-21).

The ninth chapter of Romans is not the only place in which this illustration is used. Both Isaiah 29 and Jeremiah 18 also contribute to an understanding of the truth concerning the potter and the clay. Here also there are protests against God because of a lack of realization of His purposes and will (cf. Isaiah 29:15-16; Jeremiah 18:1-6).

As clay in the potter's hand, without a voice, so was the nation of Israel. So is *all* that the Potter has formed! We cannot challenge His authority. We should not question His dealings with mankind. Who are we that we should be answering again to God?

Our short-sightedness adds to the difficulty we have with Romans 9. We see the Potter making vessels of honor and dishonor. Vessels of destruction and mercy are formed on the same wheel. Dare we even ask why? As a man, I do not venture to explain!

Yet God's explanation is plain. He carries the vessels of His indignation which are adapted for destruction so that He may be making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy (Romans 9:22-23). It is all done with a view to God's glory! The picture is much bigger than we suspect. God's dealings with mankind are mostly viewed in such a narrow and dim beam of light, and so we fail to see the glory.

We tend to consider chapter 9 alone, but it is part of a larger unit including chapters 10-11. Would we pursue the Potter's purpose through chapters 10 and 11 we would be less inclined to protest. Then, as we go further into Ephesians and Colossians our protests disappear.

GOD CREATES IN EXPECTATION

God creates the dishonorable, the irreverent, the unrighteous and the stubborn. *All* of His vessels fall into one of these categories at one time or another; but He creates them in expectation of the consummation of His purpose (cf. Romans 8:20, 21). To this end,

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

God's purpose, in the depth of His wisdom, includes the *entire* creation, and this is to the glory of the Potter from Whose wheel it was formed!

There is a purpose for all of His vessels. The depth of wisdom in God's purpose is especially manifested in "*the secret of Christ*" (Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:4). This revelation of the heading up of *all* in Christ and the reconciliation of *all* through the blood of His cross was much in Paul's mind when he penned the prayer of Colossians 1:9-12. It is a prayer for growth in the realization of God.

A PRAYER FOR REALIZATION

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) has written concerning this prayer.

This prayer of the apostle is far more needed today than ever before. In the midst of billions of sermons and millions of books and magazines devoted to theology, how little insight is there into the will of God as revealed in His latest revelation!

How small is the appreciation of His wisdom, how feeble the understanding of His purpose! And, as a result, the conduct of believers is lacking in fruit and power, and there is a want of endurance and joy of thanksgiving for the blessings which are not realized or appreciated. Therefore it is our privilege to emulate the apostle and pray for ourselves and for our fellow saints that the eyes of our hearts may be opened to see, and that it may lead to pleasing and thanking God.

Let us pray, then, that the believers may be *filled* with a realization of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for only thus can we walk worthily of the Lord for *all* pleasing, and bear fruit in *every* good work. Here it is not merely a matter of pleasing God or of doing good – we all may do ►





that in some measure even in our ignorance – but of putting quality and flavor into our actions such as will delight God’s heart. May our actions never appear to help Him in His infirmity! Let them rather reveal Him and His power. Too much of Christian activity seems to be lending God a hand as if He needed it, and is thus offensive to the Deity. Only a realization of His will can save us from this false attitude toward God and enable us to walk worthily, so as to please Him in all.

That God may be “*All in all*” is the universal goal. All of His operations during the eons are directed to this end. The latest revelations of His will are especially adapted to display the excellences of the divine wisdom and love, so that all who realize His will, will appreciate Him in the measure in which they understand it. As this is unfolded to our hearts we should grow in our appreciation of God, and thus approach the final goal ahead of others of His creatures. May God become all in us in increasing measure as we contemplate the secret of Christ, and see

His hand and head and heart engaged in drawing His creatures to Himself through sin and salvation.²

As we grow in realization of God and of His will we will find that, instead of protests, our lips are filled with praise and acclamation over the glory of our God. We will say, even as the apostle Paul:

*O the **depth** of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For, who knew the mind of the Lord? Or, who became His adviser? Or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!* (Romans 11:33-36).



2. A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*, Volume 31, pp. 245-247.

Seneca Falls NY Bible Conference

Cayuga State Park, Pavilion #1
2678 Lower Lake Rd.
Seneca Falls, NY 13148

Friday to Sunday, September 28-30, 2012

Speakers:

Dan Sheridan, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. and
Martin Zender

Schedule:

Friday night: 6 p.m., fellowship, bon fire
and food.

Saturday morning: 10 am to Noon, all
speakers.

Saturday afternoon: 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., all
speakers and Q&A.

Saturday night: Bonfire and fellowship.

Sunday morning: 10 a.m. to noon, all
speakers.



Hotels within 10-15 minute
drive of Cayuga State Park:

Hotel Clarence, 315-712-4000 (upscale but rea-
sonable. In the heart of Seneca Falls.)

Microtel, 315-539-8428 (small, clean, comfort-
able and inexpensive)

VRBO.com if you want to rent a small house on
or near the lake.

If you are able to attend, please, contact Lenny Pappano at Lpappano@frontiernet.net as a courtesy. He will update you on details as the conference gets closer.