



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XVI
Issue 378

Serving Our Generation

by — J.R. Miller (1840-1912)

David served his own generation by the will of God (Acts 13:36).

It gives dignity and also sacredness to our life to be serving our generation. Of course, we cannot do this perfectly, for nothing human is perfect.

In all of our life we do, even at our best, but a little of the beautiful work we *intend* and *plan*. The artist fails to put *all* of his vision into his picture. Even so, we blunder and stumble in our holiest endeavors. Our *clumsy hands* mar the *lovely ideals* which our soul envisions. We set out in the morning with *high resolves*, but our evenings tell of *many a short-coming*. We never live any day as *well* as we wanted to.

Yet, without attaining perfection we fulfill God's plan. One of the most interesting illustrations of such a life is David's. The Lord says,

I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My Own heart, who shall fulfill all My will (Acts 13:22).

Then in another sentence, we catch the *secret* of this life which was so complete. We are told that

David served his own generation by the will of God (:36).

It is worth our while to look closely at this inspired description of a life which so pleased God, in order that we may learn the divine will for ourselves.

DAVID SERVED

Serving is not a favorite word. We naturally resent the idea of *serving*. It seems to have an ignoble meaning; but, really, it is one of the most *royal* of words. One who has not begun to serve has not begun to live a godly life! Jesus came to show us the divine ideal, and He served to the very uttermost.



"I came not to be served, but to serve" (cf. Matthew 20:28) was His own declaration of *His life's purpose*. When they asked Him who was greatest in His kingdom, He said, "*the one who serves*" (cf. Matthew 23:11). We are to live ... not just to get, but to give; not just to be helped, but to help; not just to receive, but to bestow.

DAVID SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION

How can one serve his or her own generation? By *filling well that little place which we are assigned in God's providence*. We can do most to serve our generation at large by being a *true servant* to the little circle in the midst of which we are placed!

We say we are but *little people* and can fill only a little place. We cannot serve our generation in the same large way in which David served his; yet each individual life has its own distinct place in the plan of God, and each may fill out its own pattern. *Even the smallest life lived well* serves its generation.

Many people are oppressed and disheartened by the seeming *smallness* and *insignificance* of their life, yet every godly deed makes it a little easier for others. We *serve our generation* by lightening one burden, making one heart nobler and stronger, comforting one sorrow, and guiding one perplexed soul to peace.

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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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“I”

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Some might be surprised when we consider the frequency of Paul’s usage of the personal pronoun “I.” Depending on the English version consulted, Paul uses the word “I” nearly 700 or upwards of 1200 times; and he uses the personal pronoun “me” on nearly 200 or upwards of 300 occasions.



“In Christ” I am free from the seemingly independent “I” of Adam and joined to the *united* “I” with Christ.

I [a son of Adam] am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I [a son of God] live; yet not I [the “I” of the old creation], but Christ lives in me [the me of the new creation]: and the life [the life of God] which I [the unique person whom God that has made me to be] now live in the flesh [right now, this very day] I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Christianity sometimes can convey the idea that we have to give up who we are, that we lose our “I”; but the fact is that “*I am what I am.*” God has made me a person. “*I am*” a personality. God has made me so. “I” do not lose my personality “*in Christ.*”

“I” am very much “present” in my life; I am not “missing.” I have not somehow been replaced by Christ Jesus – my supposed “Substitute.”

“*In Christ*” “I” am still very much present! “I” have not vanished. “I” have not gone out of existence. “I” am still very much alive. Christ Jesus is not my replacement. He has identified Himself with me in living union.

“*In Christ*” I am actually now free to be myself, the real me whom He alone has made me to be. Thus, Paul could actually freely use the personal pronouns “I” and “me.”

I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

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



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Prayers of Ephesians, The: We in Christ – Christ in Us

by — E.W. Bullinger

There are two longer prayers in the Epistle to the Ephesians, plus a shorter concluding one. The two longer prayers have a common subject, Jesus Christ and Believers. However, in the first prayer it is what God made Christ for us; in the second it is what God has made us in Christ. In other words; in the first it is “We in Christ,” while in the second it is “Christ in Us”. Also the first prayer deals with God’s power which He wrought in Christ, while the second one deals with God’s power which is at work in us.

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God's Poem

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Did you know that you are God's poem? Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10,

We are His workmanship (KJV).

We are His achievement (CLT).

We are God's own handiwork (WNT).

F.B. Meyer, writing on this passage, says, "The word 'workmanship' in the Greek is 'poem.' We are God's poems" (*Back to Bethel*, 1901).

Are you troubled and concerned about the direction of your life? You needn't be. After all, He is the Great Poet of your life, and you are His beautiful poem. As Denis Durham has written in his wonderful song *His Workmanship*, "the years of your life form the stanzas, and the days form every line."

It may at times seem as though this poem has no

rhyme or reason; the divine lines can be painful, but He is directing all for your good (cf. Romans 8:28) – all in His Own time, and in His Own way. You are His masterpiece of love. He is patiently shaping you; He is telling His story with your life.

Rest assured that you are like a building under construction, a painting yet wet and unfinished, a batter still being mixed, a tree that has yet to reach maturity, a tapestry still being woven. Await with patience the Master's grand completion.

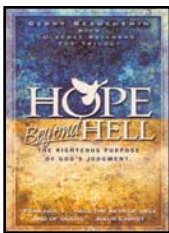
Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you, will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

No wonder Paul says,

Then do we with patience wait for it (Romans 8:25).

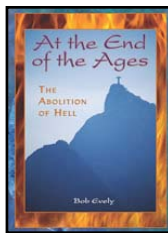
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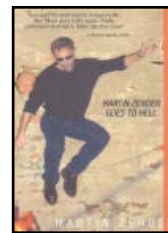
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Forsaking Tradition

by — Stephen Hill

And gathering to Him are the Pharisees and some of the scribes coming from Jerusalem. And perceiving some of His disciples, that with contaminated (that is, unwashed) hands they eat bread (for the Pharisees and all the Jews, if ever they should not be washing the hands with the fist, are not eating, holding the tradition of the elders; and from the market, except they should be sprinkled, they are not eating; and many other things are there which they accepted to hold, the baptizing of cups and ewers and copper vessels and of couches), the Pharisees also, and the scribes are inquiring of Him, "Wherefore are not your disciples walking according to the tradition of the elders, but with unwashed hands are eating bread?" Yet He, answering, said to them that "Ideally prophesies Isaiah concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, that This people with their lips is honoring Me, yet their heart is away at a distance from me. Yet in vain are they revering Me, teaching for teachings the directions of men. For, leaving the precept of God, you are holding the tradition of men of the baptism of ewers and cups. And many such like things you are doing." And He said to them, "Ideally are you repudiating the precept of God, that you should be keeping your tradition" (Mark 7:1-9, CLNT).

In this passage, Mark recounts one of many instances in which the Pharisees challenged Jesus for violating the Law and Jesus' less-than-cordial response to their accusation. The charge pertains to the ceremonial washing of hands prior to eating, which the disciples neglected to do. The tradition of hand washing had been passed down through generations of the Jewish people, and was so commonplace that the Pharisees (who were the most well versed of all Israel in the Law of Moses) could no longer even recognize this tradition as distinctly separate from the Law.



negative effects in our lives. The plague of tradition has been one of the most powerful tools of the adversary since the beginning, and we must arm ourselves with knowledge of how it functions to fight against it effectively.

We all hold to a variety of traditions – some related to family customs, others to certain days or events, and many others especially related to religious practices. Often, these traditions serve a valuable purpose of reminding us of something meaningful, but more often than not our traditions hold us hostage in a number of ways.

"Tradition" is defined as an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior (as a religious practice or social custom). Traditions are, indeed, some of the most powerful forces of human experience. Not all traditions are inherently evil; but the vast majority, if left unchecked, produce devastating results. These traditions are like cockroaches: sneaky, resilient and prone to damaging everything in their path.

The "cons" list of tradition is nearly endless, but we will take a look at a few of the most significant problems that traditions cause, and discuss how to combat their

We could spend hours listing traditions, but for our purposes we will examine some of the traditions surrounding only one subject: prayer. If I asked you to list some prayer traditions, chances are that your list would include things like praying before meals and bed, closed eyes and folded hands, kneeling, being sure to say "In Jesus' name" before "Amen," and poem prayers like "Now I lay me down to sleep" and "God is great, God is good ..."

At first glance these traditions may seem harmless (and even good), but when we consider them in more detail we discover that they are actually detrimental to spiri-

tual growth. This is the immense power of tradition. On the surface it appears beneficial, but in reality it is anything *but* helpful.

In Mark 7 Jesus contrasts tradition with the “precept of God.” In other words, the Pharisees put the *letter* of the law above the *heart* of the law. In holding to their tradition, they missed the boat completely.

This is exactly what happens in the case of nearly all religious traditions like those involving prayer. When we make it a habit of praying before every meal and at bedtime, the initial goal is to make prayer a habit so we won't forget to do it. What happens in reality is that the prayer becomes so routine that we forget what we're even praying. We say the same prayer, word for word, before every meal (“God is great, God is good ...”) and before long we don't even realize what we just prayed. Even if the prayer is varied, the habit of routine leads to complacency and we end up only praying at certain designated times as opposed to praying “*without ceasing*” as Paul advises. The tradition of praying at designated times, then, produces two of the major pitfalls of tradition: *complacency* (laziness) and *mindlessness*.

Likewise, when we hold to the tradition of always closing our eyes during prayer, we inevitably run into problems. For some, closing their eyes during prayer is an effective way to block out distractions and get a better mental image of their prayers; but for those who view closing their eyes as a *requirement* during prayer, their focus produces negative feelings toward prayer altogether. The feelings of guilt and bondage from *having* to close their eyes produce feelings of resentment. For these people, prayer is nothing more than another work that must be followed in order for God to listen to their prayers. The tradition of closing eyes is a good example of how traditions often cause *feelings of guilt and bondage*.

Many Christians believe that they must include “In Jesus' name” before they conclude their prayers in order for God even to hear them. While praying to our Father in His Son's (and our Lord's) name is certainly not a bad thing, it is ridiculous to believe that the Almighty Creator of the universe is incapable of hearing our prayers if we omit a three-word phrase. This prayer tradition is a breeding ground for *foolishness* among Christians.

Most importantly of all, the many traditions surrounding prayer produce an unhealthy level of *pride and arrogance*. When we adhere to ironclad prayer traditions and uphold them as requirements, we inevitably judge all others who don't adhere to the same traditions. We

self-righteously accuse them of not being heard if they don't say “In Jesus' name,” and we view them as heathens if they don't pray before meals or close their eyes. Contrarily, we view ourselves as righteous and don't hesitate to point out the flaws of those who don't hold to the commonly accepted traditions of prayer. Pride and arrogance were the dominant sins of the Pharisees in Mark 7. They held a tradition in such high esteem, and viewed themselves so righteous for keeping it, that they condemned the disciples for not observing what they had come to view as a practice equal with the rest of God's Law.

Prayer traditions serve as a model for the devastating effects of religious traditions in general. Whether it's traditions of prayer as in this article, or hand washing as in Mark 7, or nearly any other religious tradition, the results will always be the same. Among many other problems, adherence to tradition produces (at the very least) complacency, mindlessness, guilt, bondage, foolishness, pride and arrogance.

If, after examining your own life, you discover that you are plagued by tradition, commit to forsaking those traditions which hinder your spiritual growth. If your prayer life is routine, stop praying before meals and bedtime and pray instead at various times throughout the day. If you close your eyes during prayer out of a sense of obligation, pray with your eyes open. As a general rule, view tradition as the opposite of grace. Take a long, hard look at the traditions in your life, and commit to doing the opposite of those traditions which you realize are more damaging than helpful.



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.”



Thanks for the [Daily Email Goodies](#) and keep up the great work! You start the day off right, even for [this] lefty! – **MN**

Thank you for being a true friend for Martin to lean on, in and out of trials.

I just finished getting blown away by [BSN 370](#). Ain't much human glorifying in the *BSN*, thankfully, but was our Father displayed in a truly glorious fashion? Yes He was! WOW!

Thanks for being our brother's keeper. – **MS**

Thank you for all your continuing efforts. Although I haven't been in touch for a good while I am quietly reading and studying the [BSN](#) and [Daily Email Goodies](#), and they are a constant source of inspiration and encouragement – and often very apt at just the right time. – **England**

I really do appreciate your kindness Clyde. It has been a rough couple of years for us. It was a struggle to live in and then leave a legalistic church (more like a cult!) ... and then find the truth out there in all the muck and mire. We are thrilled to understand about grace, organized religion, and universal salvation to name a few subjects. That knowledge is a treasure we would not trade for anything, but it is lonely out here. We pretty much had to give up everything/everyone we knew. We miss having people of like mind to fellowship with (even though it was around wrong beliefs) and actually don't know anyone local at this point who believes what we do ...

The work that you are doing is especially appreciated by people like us who are out here alone (at least as far as other humans go. We know that Father and Jesus are with us). It's a comfort to know we are not alone in our beliefs and growth. – **PA**

I want to thank you, and your posse, for all the great literature that you make available. An old friend of

mine introduced me to the writings of [A.P. Adams](#) twenty odd years ago (he is among my favorites), and it is so refreshing to see some of his work in the articles you freely send out.

I am currently rereading your book [The Church in Ruins](#), which, in my opinion, is one of, if not the best, I have read on Second Timothy. Awesome! – **Canada**

Brother, I don't know of anything you have written that has touched me more or made you more dear to me than your letter concerning Martin. This letter has put much in its proper place and given me a greater peace. If your words have done this for me – then for the Body as well, as Father sees fit. Martin could be in no better place on this earth. His trial and your care are benefiting all – all who are blessed to see. – **LA**

I really love your book, [Being Ok with Not Being Ok](#). I have read it completely three times. I always refer back to certain chapters. – **FL**

Thank you so much for your lovely letter/article about Martin. I am so grateful you are taking care of our dear brother at this time. It is wonderful he can stay with you.

Both you and Martin have had the biggest impact on my and my sister's life as we walk on this new journey. You both make everything so clear for this current generation. Keep on writing!

The [Daily Email Goodies](#) and [BSN](#) have been so wonderfully timely and nourishing. Every day Father feeds me with this and I have also really loved Martin's daily radio talks. He is so unreligious and this is what the ordinary person needs to hear. The average person in Australia hates the "goodie-goodie, self-righteous kill joy Christians."

It would be so great to get you both down here one day, stirring up a hornet's nest! Father knows if this will happen. – **Australia**



The King James Version – 400 Years of Bondage 1611-2011

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

1611 was not a high spiritual mark in the history of the church, the Body of Christ. Instead of being a grand year of the pinnacle of preservation or perfection of God's Word, it was rather the sad depths of the subtle corrupting of God's Word by the historic union of governmental and ecclesiastical politics.

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God's Church – Not Ours

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Eight times Paul uses the phrase "*The Church of God*." This possessive phrase leaves no doubt as to Whom the church belongs. The church is the creation and possession of God.

If "*the Church of God*" is not ours, how do we presume to start it, form it, name it, organize it and govern it? How do we have the audacity to create its

doctrine, articles of faith and bylaws?

If you want to know who owns "your" church – whose church it really is – just answer the questions above.

God started His church, and He alone governs it. It is organic. You can't "go to it" or "join it." ■

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