



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XIX
Issue 455

The Complement Which Completes

by — Frank Neil Pohorlak (1907-1988)

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

Paul, when a prisoner in Rome, writes a letter to the ecclesia in Ephesus. Among other things, Paul writes to them about the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of God's allotment among the saints. This was part of the *secret* purpose of God which had been concealed from the eons in Him (Ephesians 1:9, 18; 3:6, 9, 11) and which the apostle then reveals and explains to his readers.

Paul desired that his readers may be given spiritual wisdom to understand this revelation. His prayer for a special "*spirit of wisdom and revelation*" makes it evident that the epistle to the Ephesians deals with a *secret* of God's purpose, which is quite distinct from His counsels which had been *revealed* before.

THE THREE WHATS

Paul would have us know three things. Each of these begins with the word "*what*":

What is the expectation of His calling,

What the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and

What the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing.

Paul was deeply stirred in his heart and greatly exercised in his mind that all of his readers would fully realize the tremendous power of these three *whats*. Later in this letter he will deal with three *thats* (3:14-19).

Ever since God started to shine in our hearts "*with a view to the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of*



God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6), the eyes of our heart have been enlightened to look forward toward receiving sufficient spiritual wisdom for a more complete understanding of Paul's prison letters.

During His earthly career, our Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to pray concerning the earthly Kingdom (Matthew 6:9-13). Through Paul, our Lord Christ Jesus in His celestial glory is teaching us how to pray for a full appreciation of our spiritual blessings among the celestials (Ephesians 1:3). Thus the apostle is praying an intelligent prayer so seldom prayed in these days. It is not often that we hear repeated this prayer that Paul prayed.

In Ephesians 1:17 we learn what he asked of God for his readers:

That God may be giving them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him.

THE FIRST WHAT: THE EXPECTATION OF GOD'S CALLING

When Paul wrote to the Colossians saying that he wanted them to remain in what they had heard, he warned them to allow no one to remove them from the expectation which they had heard before in the word of the truth of the evangel (1:5).

What had they heard in the gospel which was an expectation they should never surrender to enemies from the outside or inside (Acts 20:29-30)? It is that expectation to which he had referred in his Thessalonian and Corinthian correspondence (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:20-28).

(see *COMPLEMENT*, page 4043) ↗

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);
- 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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Canada:

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COMPLEMENT (continued from front page)

If so, our expectation is not His return to the *earth*, but our meeting Him in the *air*. This change in God's program is found only in Paul's teachings. He wanted them not to become unsettled by anyone's letter or lecture, insisting that they were already in the Day of the Lord (II Thessalonians 2:2), for we are not appointed to indignation, but to deliverance (I Thessalonians 5:9). We who are members of the Body of Christ are to be snatched away to meet Him in the air before tribulation overtakes those left on the earth. Allow no one to remove us from the expectation of God's calling.

**THE SECOND WHAT:
GOD'S ALLOTMENT AMONG THE SAINTS**

The lot takes all determination out of the hands of man and puts it into the hands of God. All life, all history, is due to divine allotment. Apart from the awards for faithful service, almost all of the treasures and honors which are to be divided among His own will be distributed by lot.

Our lot was cast by God in Christ (Ephesians 1:11). This includes each and everything which God does for us: He blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials; He chooses us in Christ before the disruption of the world (before sin was existent); He designates us beforehand for sonship; He graces us in His beloved Son, lavishes the riches of His grace on us, operates all in accord with the counsel of His will, with the aim in view that we should be for the laud of His glory – we who have a prior expectation in Christ.

Since it was *God* Who cast our lot, it is almost redundant to say that it is *God's* allotment of which we are joint enjoyers, as indicated in Ephesians 3:6. Hence our second *what* is called "*the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints.*"

**THE THIRD WHAT:
HIS POWER FOR US BELIEVERS**

The last *what*, in :19, is the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing. He tells us how we can know this power and its greatness. It is according to His mighty power which was operative in Christ when rousing Him from among the dead. This is wonderful, but it is not all. Besides rousing Him, He is seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also

in that which is impending. Again, wonderful, but it is not all.

Besides rousing and seating Him, He subjects all under His feet. Again, wonderful, but again it is not all.

Besides rousing and seating and subjecting, He gives Him as Head over all, to the ecclesia, which is His body.

Then he states these marvelous words: "*the complement of the One Who is completing the all in all.*" A.E. Knoch, in the *The Concordant Commentary* (p. 289), offers this explanation:

The sovereignty over the earth is given to the nation of Israel, according to the prophets. The sovereignty over the celestials is the portion of the ecclesia which is His Body. Between the two the entire universe is brought under the administration of Christ. Thus His body is the *pleroma*, or complement, which fills up the lack which the earth's deliverance would still leave in the celestial realms.

Its function is to *fulfill* God's purpose for the entire universe, only part of which He is able to accomplish through His people Israel.

THE COMPLEMENT WHICH COMPLETES

Four times in this short letter to the Ephesians Paul uses a form of this word (1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:13).

First, however, let us look at *pleroma* from the standpoint of passages other than these.

For example, in Colossians 1:19,

For in Christ the entire complement of the Deity delights to dwell.

Let us not pass this by as though nothing momentous had been said. In Christ the entire fullness of god delights to dwell. That which fills God full fills Christ full.

In 2:9 Paul tells us,

For in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily.

That which makes Christ full is God Himself. All of the fullness of the Deity is dwelling in Christ bodily. ►

Paul says that in Him you, the believers, are complete, filled full. Just think what this means!

All of the fullness of God fills Christ, and that which makes Christ full is that which He got from God, and that which He got from God is ours in Christ.

Thus we are made complete with the fullness of God. God's fullness is ours because we are filled with the fullness of Christ Who is filled with the fullness of God. His fullness is ours, His completeness is ours, Christ's complement is ours, His *pleroma* is ours. He Who fills Christ full is He Who fills us full in Christ; that which fills His Son also fills His sons.

OF THAT WHICH FILLS HIM WE ALL OBTAINED

This passage and its truth is surely startling when we consult the concordance. John gave us an intimation of this exquisite truth when he wrote that

the Word became flesh and tabernacles among us, and we gaze at His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth ... for of that which fills Him we all obtained, and grace for grace (1:14, 16).

WHAT HE IS WE SHOULD BECOME

Of that which fills Him we all obtained. What filled Him? Patience, which should fill us; longsuffering, which should fill us; grace, which should fill us; love for an unlovely and unloving world, that should fill us. Of that which fills Him, we all obtained.

When we fail to be what He says we are in Christ, we

have failed to grasp what Paul prays for: that we might be filled with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, and as a result of this, manifesting His name as He manifested it to His own (John 17:6), and we to those who are yet to be His own. Since His grace is our grace, His love our love, His longsuffering our longsuffering, His endurance our endurance, His fullness our fullness – why, then, our emptiness when there is His fullness?

We are defenseless when we plead lack of love, for has not His love been shed abroad in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us (Romans 5:5)?

We are defenseless when we plead lack of endurance, for has not the God of endurance deigned to dwell in these clayware containers (Romans 15:5)?

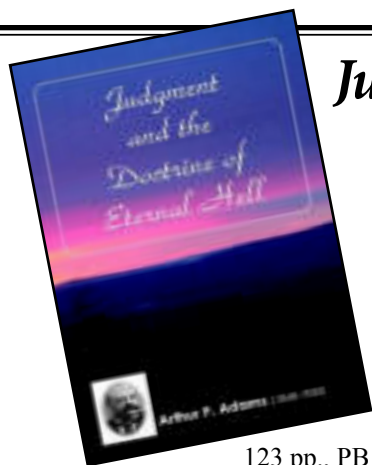
What He is we are, now, in this wicked world. What He is we should be becoming, now, in this evil eon.

He was filled with grace; should we be filled with ungraciousness? He was filled with peace; should we be filled with worry? He was filled with joy; shall we be filled with sorrow? Every one of us can continue this list from his own experience.

For this Paul admonishes every man, teaching every man, so that he should be presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus – Christ in us, the expectation of glory (Colossians 1:27-29).

THE COMPLEMENT OF THE ERAS

Let us turn back to Ephesians and take note of how Paul used this word *pleroma*, or fullness or complement.



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✦ In 1:10 we find,

*To have an administration of the **complement** of the eras, to head up the all in the Christ.*

Here we have something made known which had not been made known hitherto. That Christ was to have Kingdom glories on the earth was known. That He was to be Head over all the nations on the earth was also known. That Christ was to be Head over His own people Israel was part of the revealed counsel of God. Yet what had been kept and concealed was that the universe was to be headed up in the Christ (the Anointed One), both on the earth *and in the heavens*.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. His purpose for the earth had been made known through Scripture, but what was His purpose for the heavens? Now we are told. God purposed to have a complement of all of the eras in which the glories of the heavens should be added to the glories of the earth.

Take all that God has done and will do which is revealed in the Scriptures – apart from Paul and his writings – and we have but a fraction of the whole. Yet *with* Paul and his letters we have that which complements the tiny fraction. Thus we have the earth and heavens, all of the universe headed up in the Christ. The scope is universal and the victory is final. It shows His headship, which will be completed in the consummation.

THE COMPLEMENT OF CHRIST

Next is in 1:23. Here Paul mentions

*His Body, the **complement** of the One Who is completing the all in all.*

That the ecclesia is His Body is a fact that Paul uses to tell us a truth of tremendous import. As God must have the heavens to complement the earth, so God must have the ecclesia to complement His Son.

This is a fact which should stagger all believers. *Now* we know what God was planning to do from the very beginning. Out of all of the peoples on the face of the earth He chooses us in Him before the world disruption, and designates us in love to become sons through whom He will display the transcendent riches of His grace to the celestials (1:4-5; 2:6-7).

Imagine what that means! As there was a sense in which the earth was not complete without the heavens, so also there is a sense in which the Son is not complete without the Body.

Think of it! We believers are His Body, and as such we are to walk worthily of the Lord and thus to make known God's multifarious wisdom to the celestials now (3:10). ▶



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COMPLEMENT OF GOD

Next is 3:19. Here Paul says,

To know, besides, the knowledge-transcending love of Christ – that you may be completed for the entire complement of God.

A.E. Knoch, once again in *The Concordant Commentary* (p. 291), offers this explanation:

Every lack in the universe is filled by Christ. He is God's *Pleroma*, or Complement, Who supplies every deficiency. We, as members of His Body, are His complement. To fit us for this place He wishes us to grasp the grace which this involves, which in turn will reveal the transcendent love of Christ. Thus we will be filled or completed – brought to that finished state which fits us for our future destiny.

Paul is not satisfied simply to say that the heavens complement the earth, that Christ complements God, but that we complement God.

The ecclesia complements God? Yes, even as He complements God. For the ecclesia is said, in a sense, to be Christ.

For even as the Body is one ... thus also the Christ. Now you are the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12, 27).

POWER, OPERATION, MIGHT, STRENGTH, ROUSING, SEATING, GIVING, SUBJECTING

What is this power that is operating in us? It is the same power that in 1:19-23 is for (into) us who are believing – the transcendent greatness of His power ... in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ when God is rousing and seating and giving and subjecting all under Christ's feet.

His power is great enough to cause us to realize this love. Revel in the future transfiguration of this body of our humiliation to conform it to His own body glorious, appreciating that this is in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

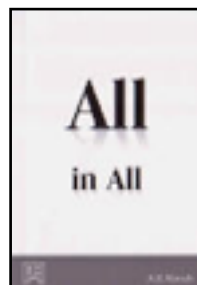
The last time Paul uses the word "complement" is in Ephesians 4:13 where we are told,

Unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of Christ.

Again Knoch, in *The Concordant Commentary* (p. 292) offers this explanation:

Before the revelation of the secret administration by means of this epistle the saints among the nations were in a period of adolescence. This is fully set forth by the apostle in writing to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 13:10). The gifts then given were for the purpose of leading them on to maturity but were to be set aside when "perfection" came. Paul's prison epistles bring maturity (Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12). The shifting changes incident to the period of growth which characterized the era from Paul's call until his imprisonment, which brought the saints among the nations from a position like proselytes to Judaism to a place entirely independent of Israel, were all intended to prepare them for this final revelation in which they become Christ's complement.

We know Him Who knows all, Who operates all, Who wills all, Who purposes all. We know *what* is the expectation of God's calling, we know *what* are the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of God's allotment among the saints, we know *what* is the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gratuity. ■



ALL in All: The Goal of the Universe

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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