



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XIX  
Issue 462

## Forward, Not Back

Part 2 of 2

### God's Paths Are Hard, but Comfort Zones Are Ultimately Harder

by – Martin Zender

*In faith died all these, not being requited with the promises, but perceiving them ahead and saluting them, and avowing that they are strangers and expatriates on the earth. For those who are saying such things are disclosing that they are seeking for a country of their own. And, if, indeed, they remembered that from which they came out, they might have had occasion to go back. Yet now they are craving a better, that is a celestial; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be invoked as their God, for He makes ready for them a city (Hebrews 11:13-16).*

*I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus. Brethren, not as yet am I reckoning myself to have grasped, yet one thing – forgetting, indeed, those things which are behind, yet stretching out to those in front – toward the goal am I pursuing for the prize of God's calling above in Christ Jesus. Whoever, then, are mature, may be disposed to this (Philippians 3:12-15).*

*Now a different one also said, "I shall be following Thee, Lord! Yet first permit me to take leave of those in my home." Yet Jesus said to him, "No one, putting forth his hand on a plow and looking behind, is fit in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61-62).*

*The sun, it came forth over the earth when Lot, he came to Zoar. Then Yahweh, He caused sulphur to rain on Sodom and on Gomorrah, and the fire from Yahweh from the heavens. Thus He overturned these cities and the entire basin and all those dwelling in the cities, and everything sprouting from the ground. Yet his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a monument of salt (Genesis 19:23-26).*

#### JUST DESERTS

God knew how hard the Sinai Desert would be for poor Israel. To ease their way, He gave them an opening miracle they would talk about for centuries: the parting of the Red Sea. This was a pretty good miracle; dang impressive by anyone's standards. It gave Israel a good start. Moses breathed a sigh of relief; maybe he wasn't crazy after all. The people got a kick out of it; it was so interesting looking back and seeing Pharaoh's army clobbered by the closing waves.



Well, no. Safe from mortal danger, yes, but still subject to the twin treacheries of fear and doubt.

In the wilderness, the eyes of Israel consistently forsook God in favor of physical circumstance. They challenged God and Moses continually for food and drink: more food, more drink. God produced these by miraculous means, but Israel had a learning disability. They constantly doubted that God would keep providing for

(see **FORWARD**, page 4099)

Safe at last.

Forward, Not Back (part 2 of 2).....4097  
The Body Parts of Christ ..... 4100



## **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).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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### **Bible Student's Notebook™**

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor  
André Sneidar – Managing Editor

### **Department Managers and Assistants**

Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Keith Martin, Nathan H. Pilkington, Janet L. Maher, Stephen & Amy Hill, Mark Peters, Cindy Pilkington, Nadine Sneidar,

### **Foreign Representatives:**

#### *Australia:*

Robert Tangchue  
12 Weeroona St  
Chermside Brisbane  
Queensland 4032  
[rtangchue@optusnet.com.au](mailto:rtangchue@optusnet.com.au)

#### *Canada:*

Rick & Donna Longva  
5211 Morrison Place  
Peachland BC V0H 1X2  
[www.GodisGod.ca](http://www.GodisGod.ca)  
[rick@godisgod.ca](mailto:rick@godisgod.ca)

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**FORWARD** (continued from front page)

them. Their common complaints were, 1) "It's not good enough," and 2) "Yes, but what have you done for us *lately*?"

The wilderness I faced in June of 1980 was milder than Israel's, but still challenging to a 20th century man just turned twenty. In the Mojave Desert, my journey began in earnest. One day on Interstate 15 between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, the temperature hit 114 degrees. Mile after mile passed without a town or even a rest area. Around two o'clock that afternoon, I felt lightheaded and desperately needed shade. I found it in the form of an abandoned dumpster. I dismounted my 1976 Ross Gran Tour ten-speed and folded myself into a square-foot of relative paradise un-baked by the sun. For the first time in my life, I felt like an animal; I needed shade to live. In one sense, I reveled in the adventure. In another sense, I realized how humiliated and alone I was. This could have been depressing, and it sometimes was. I knew that it was all temporary. The dumpster was not my ultimate destination, but a small mercy of God placed along the way, to relieve me.

In whatever wilderness you find yourself, God will provide. The provision may sometimes seem slim, but it is proof that God is thinking about you. There are no five-star restaurants in the Mojave Desert. There were no vending machines dispensing onions or leeks in the Sinai Wilderness. This is where faith comes in. It is always easier to stay where you live; but then God calls you, and impels you to move—as He did with Abram. Are you better off, then, if God doesn't call you? Never. Don't short-shrift the Creator of the universe having a plan for you, then calling you to do it.

## QUIT NOT

Can we quit the calling? While we can't quit Christ (He cannot forsake His own body—2 Timothy 2:13), I believe we can quit the high calling and be disqualified from ruling and reigning with Him. We can say, "Enough suffering!" and go back to Egypt. I don't recommend it. When you stand before Christ, you'll regret having quit. In 1980, a handful of freaky hot days would not send me hightailing back to Ohio. Israel, I believe, would have gladly taken the next flight back

to Egypt—in a heartbeat. Only Moses kept them from it. One man with a vision kept an entire nation from returning to what would later be allegorized as "the flesh." Moses cajoled, prayed without ceasing, and pep-talked his brains out to those people. In the end, at the door of the Promised Land, the entire nation balked—save for two men. In the end, even the cajoling pep-talker doubted God and turned to dust at the door of the What God Said He Would Do.

So you have imperfect faith. Congratulations. So do I. Guess what? In this era of grace, it's good enough.

God has set our hands to the plow of following Him. We are exhorted to leave both the good and the bad. God has called us to glory. The path to *our* promised land will be fraught with trials as well as blessings. On this path, God has promised to neither leave nor forsake us. In our wilderness, untold miracles abide. To experience them, we must walk into them.

## MIRACLES

Ladies and gentleman, I, Martin Zender, still believe in miracles. I do not believe in Pentecostal-type wonders, but in the small marvels sewn by God into the fabric of everyday life. On that 1980 trans-continental bicycle trip, strangers pulled over to the side of the road to hand me a Coke. In the heat and humidity of Nebraska one afternoon, a man practically emptied his picnic cooler for me. In every state of the union, people consistently invited me into their homes to sleep, eat and enjoy a hot shower.

Are these not miracles? Is not a fruit stand that appears in upstate New York on Route 20 in the middle of a national heat wave a miracle? Yes. To me, these things are all miracles: water, Coke, shade, fruit, strangers who love you, another safe place to lay one's head for the night. Isn't this enough? Even a cornfield in the middle of Iowa was, for me, a safe and wonderful place that God chose for my rest. From there, I dreamed beneath the hot stars.

## BETTER THAN BIRDS

Unless you're thinking of your future glory, tomorrow is too cumbersome to contemplate. Food? Shel-

(see **FORWARD**, page 4102)

# The Body Parts of Christ

by — Stephen Hill

In I Corinthians 12:20-25, Paul likens the Body of Christ to a literal physical body and sheds light on the value of each “member,” or body part. He writes,

*Yet now there are, indeed, many members, yet one body. Yet the eye can not say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” or, again, the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” Nay, much rather, those members of the body supposed to be inherently weaker are necessary, and which we suppose to be a more dishonored part of the body, these we are investing with more exceeding honor, and our indecent members have more exceeding respectability. Now our respectable members have no need, but God blends the body together, giving to that which is deficient more exceeding honor, that there may be no schism in the body, but the members may be mutually solicitous for one another.*

When we consider our own bodies, we inevitably view certain body parts as more “important” or “necessary” than others. We recognize the great importance of parts like the brain and heart because they exist as major driving forces for the entire system. On the other hand, we view smaller, less “vital” body parts, like our toes or eyelids, as minor and in-



significant because they don’t seem to play a major role in our bodies’ overall function.

Contrary to our flawed human perception, however, Paul points out that God views things very differently. Rather than giving exceeding honor to the supposedly more “important” body parts as we do, God, in His infinite wisdom, does the opposite. The Almighty Creator gives *exceeding* honor and respectability to the body parts we deem inferior. Why does He do this? According to Paul, God’s method “*blends the body together ... that there may be no schism in the body.*”

Several years ago, a farmer I know was involved in an accident on his farm in which he lost both of his big toes. When his friends found out, we were all devastated that our friend went through the accident but were relieved that he lost only his big toes instead of another “more valuable” body part. My friend felt the same way *until* he began recovery and realized that he couldn’t properly stand or walk. He discovered that his big toes played a crucial role in helping to provide strength and balance for the routine functions of standing and walking. Now, years later and after much therapy, he is able to stand and walk, but not normally and not without difficulty. He is now reminded on a daily basis of the great importance of



## Figures of Speech Used in the Bible

by – E.W. Bullinger

Bible students have made serious blunders through the inattention to figures of speech, clouding the real meaning of many important passages of Scripture. Bullinger’s work, first published in 1898, clarifies 217 distinct figures of speech used in the Bible. In systematic order, this classic gives the proper pronunciation of each figure of speech, its etymology or origin, and a number of Scripture passages where the figure of speech is used, giving full explanation of its use in each context. It cites nearly eight thousand Bible passages and includes five appendices and seven indexes, making it even more valuable as a reference tool. No other work approaches the scope and detail of this field of study. *New edition:* Re-typeset and formatted, with errata incorporated.

535 pp., PB

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his big toes, which he took entirely for granted prior to his accident.

Another friend of mine suffered a severe injury during high school. During a football game, he was tackled hard and was rushed to the hospital in excruciating pain. Once there, he discovered that the tackle had caused his spleen to rupture. Prior to that night, none of us ever thought about our spleens. In fact, to be honest, I don't even know the exact function of the spleen without looking it up. My friend, however, is well aware of the role that his spleen played and would certainly encourage others not to take it for granted.

Something as seemingly insignificant as a big toe actually serves a major purpose by allowing us to stand and walk. The spleen, which we all take for granted, can cause a great deal of pain when it is prevented from serving its purpose for the body.

So it is with the Body of Christ. We all exist as individual members and we each possess a unique purpose that is absolutely vital to the body as a whole. Just as every part of our physical bodies is designed to accomplish a unique purpose, we as the members of Christ's body are *designed* by God to serve a unique purpose. Ultimately, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12, our purpose is to use our God-given gifts to edify, or "build up," the body.

Unfortunately, many believers do not recognize their gifts or do not consider their gifts important enough to use actively. In their human thinking, they deem certain people as more valuable members because of their apparently greater gifts. They recognize another person as a great teacher or communicator, for in-

stance, and wish God had blessed them with the gift of teaching.

When we buy into the lie that our gifts are insignificant or unimportant, we tend to do one of two things: we either refuse to use the gifts we have, or we attempt to do something which requires a gift that we wish we had but don't have. As a result, many believers are either inactive spectators or are serving in the wrong role.

It's easy to understand that not serving is no way to help build up the body, but what about serving in the wrong role? If we consider Paul's analogy, we might ask, "What would happen if a finger attempted to function as a brain?" Obviously, this scenario would produce terrible results. Not only would the finger not be able to function at all as a brain, but it would be simultaneously neglecting its function as a finger. Thus, when we attempt to do something that God has not gifted us to do, inevitably we will fail at the task and will neglect the role that God *has* intended for us.

My good friend, Martin Zender, partners with his sister, Kelly, in ministry. Martin exists as the teacher and produces the material, while Kelly handles all of the administrative details of the ministry. Martin is a "brain" we might say, while Kelly is a "hand." Both serve their purposes very well, and neither could (or would want to) fill the other's shoes. *Both Kelly and Martin* are needed in order for the ministry to function properly. If Martin were taken away, there would be no material; if Kelly were removed, the material would not reach as many people. In order for the ministry to function properly, each person must fulfill his or her proper role, using their God-given strengths. ►

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When we understand Paul's analogy in I Corinthians 12, we realize that the people whose gifts seem insignificant are not only *necessary*, but that they are actually more honorable and respectable! They appear minor on the surface, but in reality they serve a major purpose. They are big toes helping the body to stand and walk.

Many believers recognize their gifts and desire to use them, but neglect to do so out of fear. Interestingly, two major Bible figures viewed themselves the same way. When God called Moses as His chosen deliverer of the Hebrews from Egypt, Moses attempted to excuse himself from the task because of his poor speaking ability (Exodus 4). Likewise, the apostle Paul cited his poor speaking ability on several occasions (I Corinthians 2:1; II Corinthians 10:10; 11:16), even calling it "*contemptible*." In spite of their shortcomings, God used these men in greater ways than most of us could imagine. Before long, Moses and Paul realized that their weaknesses were no hindrance to God, and that is a lesson which we also would do well to learn.

**FORWARD** (continued from page 4099)

ter? Money? These too easily become worries. Do your daily work at a sane pace—God will provide. God takes care of lilies and sparrows. Does He not care more for you than these?

Step out into the adventure that God is calling you to live. Then, don't look back. The Red Sea crashed shut behind the Israelites; the escape route back into Egypt was forever closed. Some bridges back to our pleasant little ruts seem open to us; an option. Do not consider them thus. They are not open – not to you. You are God's adventurer. What you did in the past, you did. You did it, and it is a monument to your life. Good job. Now stop staring at the trophy. Or stop staring at the failure. The past *had* to happen, every detail of it. Nothing of it can be changed. This is where the sovereignty of God comforts and cures us. Use the sovereignty of God like a lever to move away problems. The sovereignty of God is not merely a teaching. It is not a doctrine of our theology. It is a reality, a tool, a practical help giving us peace about our ragged past and our future expectation. The future is just as set in stone as the past. God knows where He is taking us because He already sees it. He pre-set our destiny before we were born. We walk in a bubble of ignorance,


Another fear many people have is that, by using their gifts, others will view them as arrogant or prideful. This is a convenient tactic of the Adversary to prevent members of the Body from fulfilling their roles. It causes us to hide behind a seemingly righteous excuse to avoid action. Understand that it is *not* arrogant to acknowledge and use the gifts that God has given to us!

If you do not recognize your gifts, or you view them as useless, think again! Recognize that, as a member of Christ's body, you are promised gifts for the purpose of building up the body. Prayerfully consider what your gifts are and commit to using them. If you are a finger, do not attempt to be an eye. Avoid the urge not to act or acknowledge your gifts out of fear that others will view you as arrogant. Do not be content with standing on the sidelines, allowing others whom you view as superior to do all of the work for the Body of Christ. Each of us is equally important for the whole, whether a "toe," a "spleen" or a "heart." Let us each use our gifts and be exactly what God has designed us to be so that the body functions just as it should, perfectly blended and free of division. ■

unaware of what the next moment holds. God wants it that way; ignorance is His gift to us. It develops our faith and keeps us looking and longing for Him. It's good enough for now.

God is "out there," but He's also here. You will survive today. Retreat is not an option, so go to bed one more time and see if you wake up. You probably will. Even if you don't, future glory is yours as a member of Christ's body.

I am here with you, walking alongside to the sounds of divine music. ■



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## ***A Look at Alcohol in the Scriptures***

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

[God brings forth] *wine which makes man's heart glad* (Psalm 104:15).

Wine was a blessing in Scripture (Proverbs 3:10), something to be received gratefully from God (Psalm 104:15). Like many things that God has graciously given to man, alcohol can be used or abused.

However it is important that we do not confuse use with abuse, or drinking with drunkenness. To prohibit the use of alcohol, by pointing to verses about its abuse, would be like condemning the eating of food because of gluttony, or requiring sexual abstinence because of carnal sins. This is deceptive and erroneous religious reasoning.

This study briefly surveys alcohol related Hebrew and Greek words and some of their contexts, considers passages usually used to condemn the use of alcohol, and looks at a few common objections.