



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 24
Issue 598

Maturity

by — Alan Reid (1910-1992)

Until we should all attain ... to mature manhood, to the adult stature of Christ's complement (Ephesians 4:13).

It is incumbent upon every saint of God to give the subject of maturity prayerful and constant consideration. No one, physically mature, cares to be considered "childish" or credited only with the imperfect intellect of the adolescent. Yet, unfortunately, it causes no concern to the bulk of believers that they are unable to comprehend the transcendent truths of the Scriptures of Truth.

Not only so, but there is a marked apathy and stagnation in the spiritual life of many of God's dear people – a stunted growth in their Christian life which bespeaks the lack of solid nourishment.

Were Paul to return and pen a letter to the saints today, would he not have to write as of old,

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to minors in Christ (I Corinthians 3:1).

God has made rich provision of "solid food" for us.

The question is, "Are we yet able?" The writer to the Hebrews had to administer a rebuke similar to that of Paul to the Corinthian saints. Instead of being teachers, they themselves required to be taught – taught even the "rudimentary elements of the oracles of God" (Hebrews 5:12), and had need of milk, being then incapable of solid nurture. Certainly, a knowledge of the rudiments of the Word of Christ was an indispensable foundation; but with that alone, maturity could not be reached.

THE CAUSE OF IMMATURITY

The cause of the Corinthian immaturity was carnality, evidenced by the divisions existing among them, the outgrowth of partisan tendencies. Consequently, they were still fleshly and walked according to man (I Corinthians 3:3). It must be concluded that, if a saint is incapable of assimilating the nourishment necessary for the maintenance of spiritual growth, then his mind cannot be influenced by the revelation of God which will renew the mind and transform the life. The knowledge of the progressive revelation of the Word of Truth is as necessary for the saint's spiritual growth as is the blood to his physical existence. Just as the blood bathes and nourishes the body tissues, so the Word of God should pervade the mind of the believer, transforming it and renewing it.

God's revelation of truth was progressive. While it would seem that, in the Corinthian ecclesia, a few were mature (I Corinthians 2:6), to whom Paul could speak God's wisdom in a secret, the majority were not capable of understanding.

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THE COMING OF MATURITY

For the purpose of leading these believers on to maturity, gifts were given (I Corinthians 12:27-31), but these were *temporary* and served during the *era of readjustment*. That this was so was clearly indicated by the apostle when he spoke of “a path suited to transcendence” (:31). Prophecies and knowledge were to be done away with, languages (tongues) would cease (I Corinthians 13:8-9), and, when *maturity* came, that which was out of an *installment* was to be abrogated (:10).

Everything pointed to something yet to be revealed. Comparison between the Corinthian and Ephesian epistles (I Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11) will show that, when maturity did come, the lesser graces were dispensed with. With the penning of Paul’s perfection epistles, maturity came (Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12).

With these extraordinary epistles, the Word of God was completed (Colossians 1:25), in the sense that it embraced pre-eonian and post-eonian times, and was now universal in scope. The irritating and restricting barriers of Judaism had vanished and a *SECRET* had been revealed. What a secret: *CHRIST AMONG THE NATIONS* – a glorious expectation!

To whom God wills to make known what are the glorious riches of this secret among the nations, which is: Christ among you, the expectation of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Unburdened now of this unparalleled revelation, Paul’s fervent desire was to see it comprehended. For this cause he struggled in prayer on behalf of the saints. The truth was precious to Paul and his life was one intense longing that others might share its preciousness. His petitions were always pointed, never self-centered or clouded in rhetoric.

We are given a glimpse of his prayer life in Ephesians, when he bows the knee (3:14-21), beseeching that “*you may be **completed** for the entire complement of God*” – a tremendous request born of an intense longing for the spiritual welfare of his fellow saints!

CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE

The prerogative of every believer is the attaining to “*mature manhood, to the adult stature of Christ’s complement*” (Ephesians 4:13). Such a goal seems to be set in an aurora too brilliant for our feeble vision to behold, but it is within the reach of every saint of God. If not, then Paul prayed and toiled, admonished and taught in vain (Colossians 1:28-29).

Paul labored to present *every* man mature – not a few – and we can praise God that the attainment of maturity is a possibility to every child of His. Paul’s testimony to Epaphras’ solicitude for the Colossian ecclesia is one of the most touching records of affection that we have. It is evident that the truth and grace of God had wrought effectively in the heart of this fellow captive of his, and his own concerns were submerged in his constant thought for his fellow
(see *MATURITY*, page 5189)



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The Best of J.R. Miller, Vol. 1

by — James Russell Miller (1840–1912)

Miller was a prolific author, born of Irish/Scottish descent to James Alexander Miller and Eleanor Creswell, near Frankfort Springs, Beaver County, PA. He was a graduate of Westminster College (New Wilmington, PA), and Allegheny Theological Seminary (Allegheny, PA). Miller pastored churches in New Wilmington, PA, Philadelphia, PA, and Rock Island, IL, and was the author of over 60 published books, as well as countless booklets and pamphlets. He also served as supervisor of over two dozen periodicals with a combined annual circulation of over 66 million copies at the time of his death. This is the first in a collected series of his best selected articles.

The One Body Was Himself!

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

A story is going around that shows the futility of the phrase “gathering on the ground of the one body.” This always means union on the basis of agreement in doctrine. A zealous brother sought earnestly to associate only with those who had “the truth.” He separated himself from all doctrinal error (except what he unconsciously held himself)!



Gradually his fellowship became restricted to a very few, as one after another was found to be “unsound” in the faith. Finally, he found that all of his associates, except his wife, were tainted with “evil doctrine.” To make matters still worse, he discovered one day that even his wife was not sufficiently “sound.” He was all alone. Then, however, he realized that he had indeed come to the ground of the “one body.” The one body was himself!

Those believers who confine their fellowship to saints of the same mind in doctrinal matters have a sad history of dissension and division. The numbers of adherents have grown but little, but the number of

parties has multiplied. The idea that fellowship is based on doctrine is itself false teaching. In Corinth the fundamentally unsound deniers of the resurrection were not put out, either by the assembly or the apostle. The immoral person¹ was excluded, not the heretics. In Paul’s epistles, which should guide us in this administration, doctrine is not the basis of fellowship. We should patiently bear with false teaching. We should lovingly correct it; but we should never exclude those who hold it. In practice, in many cases, those who have the truth were excluded by those who were in error. It is a device of Satan to divide those who should preserve the spirit’s unity.

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 22 (1931)
“The Ground of the One Body”
(abridged & edited)

1. *i.e.*, “the wicked one” (1 Corinthians 5:13), in reference to: “that there is prostitution among you, and such prostitution (which is not even named among the nations), so that someone has his father’s wife” (:1, Concordant Version).

A Mighty Purifying Force

by — Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921)

The hope of the Church which is His body is stated in Philippians 3:20-21,

For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.



Such as live in the pure atmosphere of this hope are least affected by the changing temperature of these present times. There is an evenness about them which speaks of heaven. There is no more potent influence for detaching the children of God from present things than prospects of glory with Christ. “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” is a mighty purifying force.

— *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 8, page 98



Reader's Question Box #19

Who Are We, and Where Do We Fit In?

by — Oscar M. Baker (1898-1987)

Q: If all of the promises of the coming of the Lord were to Israel and the grafted in Gentiles, just who are we and where do we come in?

A: That is a good question. The most important question for us is that concerning our hope, our destiny and our position before God.

We don't wait until the coming of the Lord: our hope is to be manifested with Him in Glory (the *super-heavens*) *before* He comes to earth (Colossians 3:4).

Our destiny has *nothing* to do with the earth and the Kingdom set up on earth. Neither does it have anything to do with the New Jerusalem which comes down out of the heavens.

Our destiny is to enjoy spiritual blessings "*in heavenly places*" (Ephesians 1:3). Our destiny is to be seated with Christ at the right hand of God (Ephesians 2:6). Our position is one that is "*far above all*" princes (Ephesians 1:21), for we are in Him since we are His Body (Ephesians 5:23).

The present calling has as its goal the Holy of Holies. This is a place where no ordinances of any kind can enter. "*We are complete in Him*" (Colossians 2:10).

Since this is the "*dispensation* (or administration) of the *grace of God*" (Ephesians 3:2), we have nothing to do with any laws or covenants. Neither do we have any part in the promises or blessings of Abraham. We are blessed with "*all spiritual blessings*" in the *super-heavens* in Christ Jesus, not Abraham (Ephesians 1:3).

Israel was set aside at Acts 28:28, and with her setting aside was set aside all of the promises also pertaining to her as well as the ordinances which were connected with those promises.

WATER BAPTISM

The baptism of John was for repentant Israel, not for any Gentiles. The baptism of the disciples was for the same purpose. Our Lord identified Himself with His people Israel and was baptized of John.

Only Jews were baptized up to Acts 10. Then we find that Gentiles were also baptized, for they were being identified with repentant Israel. They were grafted in; they partook of the promises made to Abraham.

Since we have nothing to do with the promises made to Abraham, nor are we grafted into the nation of Israel, nor do we have anything to do with any of Is-

A photograph of an open book with a pen resting on the pages. The text "Capital Area Fellowship Saturday March 25th 2017" is visible in the upper left corner of the image.

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rael's blessings, we do not partake of water baptism. There is no place for water baptism in the ministry of the mystery. It is no part of the walk that is worthy of the calling of the present dispensation.

THE PASSOVER

The "cup" at the Passover was to signify the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28; I Corinthians 11:25). It was to be observed by His disciples until He should "come." This feast of the Passover was observed right up to the end of Acts. It was observed on the 14th of Nisan. The last Passover observed by the Lord and His disciples was on Tuesday night and the death of the Lord was on Wednesday afternoon.

I am not here discussing the so-called "Lord's Sup-

MATURITY (continued from page 5186)

saints. No other word could convey the intensity of the desire that impelled Epaphras' prayers so much as "struggling." These petitions on behalf of the Colossian believers were that they "MAY STAND MATURE and fully assured in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12). Paul adds "For I am testifying of him that he has much misery over you."

We are designated to be *conformed* to the image of the Son of God (Romans 8:29). What a glorious prospect for each dear child of God! What an incentive to stretch "out in front towards the goal" and pursue

per" which was Baal's supper and was borrowed from Babylon. Such never had any part in any dispensation of God.

THE NEW COVENANT

Since water baptism and the Passover were closely connected with the New Covenant, it might be well to find what it is. The Old Covenant was with Israel, as most will agree. So was the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8-12; Luke 22:20; Mark 14:24; I Corinthians 10:16.) No covenant was ever made with the Gentiles. They are under grace.

— *Truth for Today*, March, 1949
(edited)

the prize! Conformation to the image of God's dear Son – *not* configuration to this eon.

It was a source of great grief to the beloved apostle that there were those who were "disposed to terrestrial things." May it not be said of us who read these notes that we are so disposed, but that we seek, and are disposed to, that which is above, where Christ is! (Colossians 3:1-3). In **evil**, be *minors*, in **disposition**, be *mature*!

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 30
(abridged & edited)



The Myth of Easter

"The Christian Mythology" Series

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

There are many myths in Christendom. They have managed to master their own form of mythology. Easter is an example of such a religious fable.

If Easter is the celebration of the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, then why does its date change every year? Historical dates do not fluctuate; but Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. Have you ever wondered why?

It is one of the glaring clues that something is seriously wrong with Christendom. The Western Christian religion can't seem to get anything right when it comes to even the simplest of Scriptural truths.

Have you ever really considered if there is any scriptural basis of Good Friday or Easter Sunrise Services that are so commonly observed by the religious community? Additionally, have you ever considered what Easter Rabbits and Easter Eggs have to do with the resurrection of Christ or teachings of God's Word?

Although millions of people are of the opinion that Easter and all of its customs are Christian and originated as a result of Christ's resurrection, it is a historical fact that the observance of Easter long antedates Christianity by centuries.



Editor's Desk

Doctrine Not the Basis for Fellowship

Doctrine Not the Basis for *dis*-Fellowship

Over the years I have sought to do my best to use these pages to share what I have continued to learn from Scriptures. I have also attempted to model them as best I can in light of my own circumstances. I have done so because I have a firm conviction and passion concerning them. I trust that you have sensed how important these matters are to me.

I do not, however, expect any adherence to my personal understanding from those with whom I fellowship. I have no requirement that others believe what I believe, or practice what I practice. I simply desire that each follow the Lord out of a pure heart of personal faith.

Even if your own studies and convictions lead you elsewhere, I heartily welcome your fellowship. This is because there are greater principles that have preeminence – pure grace, unconditional love, genuine acceptance, individual faith and personal liberty.

Paul clearly taught that two men with opposite beliefs and practices (even if one may be “*weak in the faith*”) could both live their lives in honor to the Lord. Doctrine is not the basis for fellowship, nor *dis*-fellowship.

Now, this doesn’t mean that we could always walk with others in all things, but it does mean that we can support and encourage others to be faithful to the Lord based on the understanding that our Lord gives them.

While I trust that you will give the material found in the *BSN* thoughtful and prayerful consideration in light of God’s Word, they are by no means the standard of faith.

I appreciate any light or insight that you may be able to share with me – one member of Christ’s body to another. We are fellows together: let us encourage and help one another.

Your brother and servant,

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Bible Student’s Notebook™

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This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will 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 in ages past*” (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- 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);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. 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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Expiration _____ / _____ **3-Digit Security Code** _____