



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 31
Issue 763

Complete in Christ **From Imperfection to Perfection**

by — Wilhelm Prolingheuer

For in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily. And you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of every sovereignty and authority (Colossians 2:9-10).

THE DARK BACKGROUND

In order to be able to understand this transcendent truth correctly, it is necessary to see its dark background. We human beings, as God created us, learn only by contrasts. The first pair in Eden could not appreciate the good that surrounded them. Therefore they were not grateful and could not thank their Creator. They needed the experience of evil. This relationship of good to evil is also set forth in the *one tree*, which was to teach them two important truths: the blessing of good and the curse of evil.

So it was God Who introduced evil and locked up all in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all (Romans 11:32). He counters sin with grace, curse with blessing, stubbornness with obedience, darkness with light, death with life, enmity with love. The one whose eyes have been opened to this glorious truth will surely join Paul in that exultant passage in Romans (11:33-36):

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!

Paul, the least of the apostles, not competent to be called an apostle, looks at his own past as the necessary background for his role as the herald of God's grace. When he writes that God severed him from his mother's womb and called him through His grace to unveil His Son in him, he recognizes that his life of sin, which he had lived, made him the pattern for the display of the transcendent grace of God which he was to herald among the nations (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

Those whom he called out were in many ways like their apostle and therefore received the same grace. We can see this in ourselves. Not only were we slaves of sin, but we were also outside of the blessing of Israel. Among these God does not call many powerful, noble or wise, but rather the weak, the ignoble and the contemptible. Truly, this is in accord with the character of transcendent grace.

THE TRANSITION

The second point which we must grasp in order to understand our theme fully is *the transition* in Paul's service from immaturity to maturity. This took place gradually as Israel was set aside and the Administration of the Secret was introduced.

If we compare Paul's attitude in Acts, when he still was connected with the Kingdom message for Israel, with the teaching of his epistles, we will see a

remarkable difference between them. In the first case the door to the Kingdom had not yet closed, and Paul acted accordingly; but in the second case he wrote his letters to the Thessalonians, Romans, Corinthians and Galatians in which he prepared the believers for the deeper revelations of the later Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians).

This should show us that there was a period of transition. We can see this clearly when we distinguish between the fundamental truths which Paul made known to the Romans (justification, reconciliation and the sovereignty of God), and the transcendent glories which he could not reveal until later.

Now it is a remarkable fact that, when he came to Rome, where there was an ecclesia which had been taught many deep and precious truths by his letter, he still proclaimed Christ as Messiah to the Jews in that city. So the rejection of Israel and the gradual unfolding of the most sublime revelations which had been hidden before that time went hand in hand.

MATURITY

In I Corinthians 13:8-13 the apostle speaks of this transitional period. That which is out of an installment shall be discarded when maturity has come. Paul uses the figure of the immaturity of childhood in contrast with the maturity of a grown man. This is not a personal accomplishment, but designates the time when a person is declared to have become of age. Then he is master of his own possessions and has a different legal standing than a minor (Galatians 4:1-3). It is the period in life which begins after the years of immaturity have passed.

Paul includes himself among the former minors, but says that when he became a man, he discarded everything connected with his former status. He no longer knows out of an installment but is able to recognize according as he is recognized. These words point forward to the revelations in the Prison (or Perfection) Epistles, in which the believers are transported into the light of transcendent grace, as chosen in Him before the disruption, yes, even called according to God's own purpose before the eons, and already seen as complete in Christ, their realm being inherent in

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- 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 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 (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- 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).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication, thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. 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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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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the heavens (Philippians 3:20).

This does not mean that, when the Perfection Epistles were written, Paul's previous revelations had all become obsolete. Rather they are there being perfected, elevated to a higher plane, where there is no longer room for such visible gifts and blessings as tongues, miracles, powerful healings and personal, spiritual appearances and revelations, but where the members of Christ's Body are blessed with every spiritual blessing among the Celestials, and seated there in Him.

GOD'S WORD WAS COMPLETED

These riches flow to us out of the heart of God, the Father, and were hidden there from the eons, until Paul was allowed to reveal them. Thus *God's Word was completed*. The Greek word *plēroō* means to fill, or to add something to fill full that which was imperfect before. This development, from the rudiments to the most sublime heights of the riches of God's Word, cannot be given too much attention.

People tell us again and again, "We think what Jesus said is the *most* important. His authority is greater than Paul's." We realize that those who speak thus want to give Jesus the highest, most honorable place, but we wish to accomplish the same thing, and therefore reply: have you never read what Jesus said to His disciples in His words of farewell to them?

Still much have I to say to you, but you are not able to bear it at present (John 16:12).

Do you not know that Jesus, the exalted One, severed

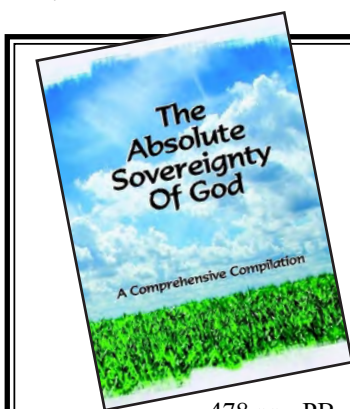
Paul from his people and his brethren for a special service among the nations, and appeared to him repeatedly to instruct him about the things that were not revealed before? Is it not written that Paul did not receive the evangel he preached from men, but through a revelation of *Jesus Christ*? (Galatians 1:8-12).

Have you never noticed how God appoints times and seasons for teaching different truths and speaking in different ways to men, leading them on from milk to solid food, from fundamental to deeper lessons; from law to grace, from terrestrial to celestial things (Galatians 4:4; II Corinthians 5:16-17; Romans 3:21-23; Ephesians 2:13-22; etc.)?

Have you never read Ephesians 3:8, where Paul speaks of the *untraceable* riches of Christ, that is, His glorious exaltation over all, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which he makes in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:11)? Does not this purpose include a progressive development in God's dealings and planning, that He may attain the goal which He Himself has set?

Have you never heard of the *Secret Administration of the grace of God*, which was revealed to Paul for us, and which had been hidden from the eons in God, and therefore could not be found anywhere before the appropriate time (Ephesians 3:1-9)?

Our God is a God of order. His Word is clear and keen above any two-edged sword. We are exhorted to correctly cut the Word of Truth, so that we may be found as unashamed workers (II Timothy 2:15). This is impossible if we do not learn to leave every truth where God has placed it, both as to time and the *per-*



478 pp., PB

See order form.

The Absolute Sovereignty of God (A Comprehensive Compilation)

This quintessential book victoriously celebrates and convincingly proclaims the absolute sovereignty of God. Sadly, religion has veiled the truth of the God of the Bible, making Him either an aloof deity, indifferent to the condition of the creation, or one who is at the worst cruel or at the least unloving and uncaring. Yet the loving Deity of Sacred Scripture always has had and will have sole and complete control over His entire creation. This ultimate collection of 100 works by 34 authors spans nearly 175 years. It is an extensive reference work that is essential for every library.

son to whom it was entrusted. Therefore let us open our hearts to Paul's special evangel, the completion of the Word of God, which is revealed to Paul alone, and give it the highest place. For it is the message of Christ, *the exalted One*, Who is to be in us.

Jesus said, "I am acquainted with the Father, and I am keeping His word" (John 8:55). We can have the same experience if we keep the word addressed to us. All other Scripture is also beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction ... that we may be equipped, fitted out for every good act (II Timothy 3:16), but must not be applied directly to those to whom it was not addressed.

HUMILIATION COMES BEFORE EXALTATION

In order to come nearer to the main topic of this article, let us now consider Christ's glorious exaltation and headship over all, which we can truly understand only in the light of His self-humiliation and deep self-abasement.

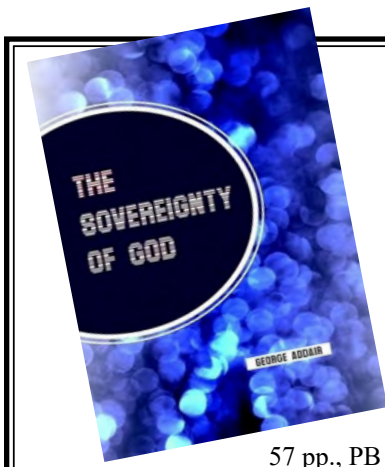
Paul, His slave, describes these to us in most impressive words (Philippians 2:5-8). He descended, in obedience to the will of His Father, far lower than the average man ever descends – to the cross, the symbol of an utterly cursed state. He Who knew no sin was made sin and, cut off from the heretofore unbroken and continual living connection with His God, He experienced death. This path to the death of the cross He took on Himself voluntarily, so that His Father's loving plan for the entire creation might be carried out.

Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him and graces Him with the name that is above every name.

Out of the deepest depths, God begins Christ's exaltation, the consequences of which are fraught with transcendent glory for us and all of His creation. We will try to grasp, in spirit, one step after another of this exaltation of Christ, in order to see the marvelous fact that *we are in Him*, in all of its radiant brightness.

When the transcendent greatness of God's power in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, roused Christ from among the dead and vivified Him (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 1:18), His exaltation *began*. Here the nature of His exaltation is revealed to us, and it is important to recognize this great turning point, which commenced for the *entire* Universe with Christ's rousing from the dead. It is a road from death to life, from darkness to light, from corruption to glory, from weakness to power. It is the dawn of a *New Creation*, rising from death and the tomb up to the light and life of the glory of God.

In Him, the Firstborn from among the dead, dwells the entire complement of God (*plērōma*: that which fills or completes), in order to reconcile all that was created in Him and through Him (Colossians 1:15-20). What would we be, what would God's work be, without the exaltation of Christ, which began with His resurrection? Here God's victorious power of life over the might of death becomes visible and opens up to us a marvelous path, leading to the goal that God has set for Himself. That is, to abolish death as the last enemy, and to vivify in Christ all who have



57 pp., PB

The Sovereignty of God

by — George Addair

The trend of the centuries has consistently been that of the exaltation of man and the abasement of God. Many feel that the Creator has delegated His rule and authority to the use or abuse of the creature. They have reduced God and His Divine office to the extent that multitudes of people now have only a superficial conception of Him.

See order form.

died in Adam. This is the aspect of the nature of Christ's exaltation, which we behold as an exhibition of the mighty power of God.

The other, and by no means less precious, aspect is the *object* of His exaltation. God, leading Him through and *above* the heavens into the very Celestials, seats Him at His right hand, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named (Hebrews 4:14; Ephesians 1:20-21; Philippians 2:9). There He ascended the throne of the Universe, in order to rule over all.

THE SECRET OF CHRIST

This exaltation of Christ as Head over all is in accord with the secret will of God, in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him, to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth (Ephesians 1:9-10).

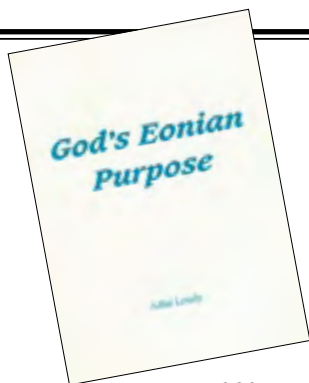
This secret of Christ, now fully revealed, surpasses by far everything that was written concerning Him in previous Scriptures. During the eons God caused one beam of light after another to irradiate the glory of His Anointed One. Beginning in Eden, and on through Moses, David in his Psalms, and the prophets, the picture of Messiah had become clearer and clearer, as to His capacity as Israel's King, Who was to rule the Earth. After His ascension to the right hand of God His glory was seen in a still more luminous way. We can observe a continually increasing bril-

liance leading up to this secret of the all-surpassing greatness of Christ as Lord over the entire Universe, that Paul, the least of all the apostles (what a contrast!) brings to its crowning consummation.

This secret of the universal headship of Christ was not entirely hidden from the other apostles. Peter wrote (I Peter 3:22) that He is at God's right hand, having gone into Heaven, messengers and authorities and powers being subjected to Him; but Paul was commissioned to bring the clearest and fullest light on this grand and glorious theme, and this to the nations.

For the sake of a better understanding, we should add here that this secret of Christ, which is expounded in Ephesians 1:9-10 and 3:4-5, must not be confused with the special Ephesian message of the Secret Administration of the grace of God. The latter was entrusted to Paul alone, and to none of the other apostles, for they had to learn about it from him. The secret of Christ, His headship over all, is in *accord* with the Secret Administration of God's grace, which reveals the blessings of His members.

Let us combine once more the facts of Christ's elevation. He was roused out of the power of death and the darkness of the tomb by God's transcendent might. He was vivified, led through the Heavens into the Celestial spheres, seated at the right hand of God, graced with a name above every name, and placed over every authority and power and lordship among the Celestials as their *Head*. There we now behold Him, in accord with the purpose of the eons,



383 pp.

See order form.

God's Eonian Purpose

by — Adlai Loudy

First printed in 1929, this work is a review of God's plan and purpose, gathering together many of the most basic themes of Scripture, including *The Beginning of Creation*, *The Eons and Administrations*, *Justification*, *The Conciliation*, *Completeness in Christ*, and *The Goal of the Universe*. These and other vital subjects are presented in an interesting and informative manner. The book contains charts and illustrations which provide a welcome visual supplement to the text. (*Available in Hardcover & Paperback*)

"This is probably the most suitable of our publications for those of your friends who are just becoming interested, or who do not know of the truths we teach, yet are willing to read and to consider them. It is written in a simpler manner than some of our other publications, and is easier for the beginner to understand. It covers, in a general way, most of the great fundamental subjects of the Scriptures." — A.E. Knoch

as God's Executive, called and empowered to carry out God's universal plans of deliverance and salvation. To equip Him for these stupendous tasks there dwells in Him the entire complement of the Deity bodily (Colossians 2:9), for He will bring all to a satisfying consummation. What a wealthy God! What a crown that Christ wears! We should broaden our hearts to take in these riches of glory, in order to be filled full with the realization of them.

OUR COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST

From this pinnacle, the triumphant sublimity of Christ, we will now consider our completeness in Him, and seek to grasp it by faith. When we do so, we shall suddenly become overwhelmingly rich. Yet just as certainly as we will once literally take possession of this wealth, we can temporarily lose the enjoyment of it now if we do not lay hold of it with the spirit of our minds and preserve it in our hearts. We must heed the warning,

Beware that no one shall be despoiling you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ (Colossians 2:8).

Christ is the title of our Lord which expresses His official position as God's Mandator. He is the one, anointed beyond any of His partners (Hebrews 1:9), to do God's will and finish His work. In Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling, bodily (Colossians 2:9). Therefore, everything which He carries out, and which we consequently have in Him, is perfect and has no need of any supplement. We are God's achievement, His alone, created in Christ

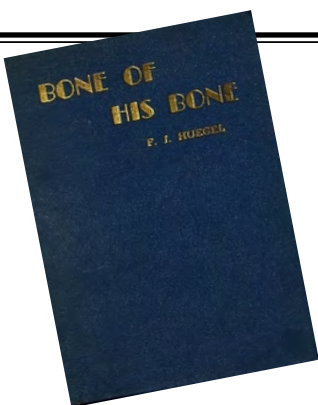
Jesus. No merit or worthiness of ours has had a hand in this – yea, the opposite is true. Our total lack of merit provides the occasion for His grace, making it crystal clear how great it is, for in grace are we saved (Ephesians 2:8).

The phrase "*in Christ*" expresses such a close and vital union with our Lord, that this grand fact cannot be overemphasized. It may help us to grasp this better if we compare this being "*in Christ*" to an unborn babe in its mother's womb. There it lies, well protected, dependent on her stream of life, surrounded by her affectionate thoughts. Everything that the mother does and that happens to her has a close relationship to the babe. The mother's well-being is the babe's as well; but such examples, with which we try to illustrate spiritual truths by everyday occurrences, contain a danger if we press them beyond the point which we want to emphasize, or if we reason from them and come to unwarranted conclusions. We wish only to apply this figure to the marvelous truth that we are "*in Christ*," so that we may better grasp what Paul wants to teach us in his letters, which are full of this thought.

SALVATION IN HIM

In Him we were chosen before the disruption of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Here, in the *Son of His love*, God selected the ecclesia which was to complete the Christ for His universal and all-embracing work of salvation. God designated us for this task long before we were born.

When Christ, in the fullness of the time, shed His blood on the cross, our salvation in Him was accomplished. His blood is the foundation of our justifica-



116 pp., PB

Bone of His Bone: Beyond the Imitation of Christ

by — F.J. (Frederick Julius) Huegel

The author points to a life that is a participation in Christ's life rather than imitation of it: a participation in His suffering, death, crucifixion, resurrection, appearing and victory.

See order form.

tion and deliverance. It is the price paid for our ransom, so that we should be freed from the slavery of sin and death. In Christ, God has judged (set right) all of our sins and declared us to be just. Thus, with God's Own righteousness we are saved from all indignation (Romans 5:9). We, the enemies, are now conciliated through the death of His Son, and in His life our salvation is guaranteed (:10). With this we are now included in the family of God, where peace reigns (Romans 5:1, 11; Ephesians 2:19).

That no one might praise himself, deluded by vain thoughts, we are continually reminded of the fact that all of this is of God and entirely His work. No part of it is our own accomplishment. We have nothing in which to boast. It is of Him (God) that we are in Christ Jesus (I Corinthians 1:30). We were not placed there by ourselves.

Even as the source of our riches is, and even as the sublimely blessed Christ is, thus also is the wealth, given to us in Him.

CIRCUMCISED AND BAPTIZED

And you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of every sovereignty and authority, in Whom you were circumcised also with a circumcision not made by hands, in the stripping off of the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ. Being entombed together with Him in baptism, in

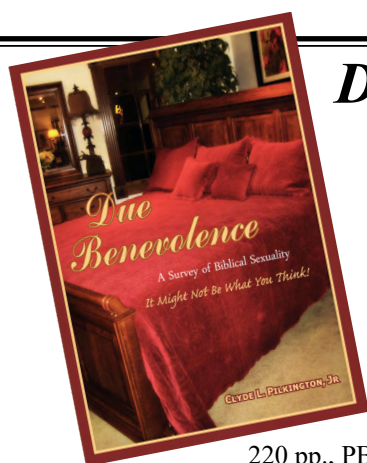
whom you were roused together also through faith in the operation of God (Colossians 2:10-12).

In the circumcision of Christ we have the stripping off of the body of flesh. In baptism, we are baptized in the baptism of Christ by inclusion in His entombment and resurrection.

As those who have died with Christ, we have been led away from the shadows (of *ritual* circumcision and baptism) to the substance (of *real* circumcision and baptism). Paul expresses the same thought in Romans 6:3-4. We have been baptized into Christ Jesus, that is, into His death. The element is not water but spirit. Spirit alone can baptize into Christ's death.

TRUE LIFE

Just as Christ did not remain in death, our existence is likewise not finished and concluded in being dead in Him. Our inclusion in Him, the living One, necessitates our vivification with Him. Now we have a part in His true life (Colossians 2:13; Romans 5:10; 6:11). This divine fact, *in Christ*, laid hold of by faith, is capable of illuminating our entire being while here on Earth. Since we know that Christ, once roused from the dead, will not die again, our own life in Him is guaranteed. Christ is our life, and with Him it is hidden in God. Verily, in Christ an entirely new creation has been brought into being.



220 pp., PB

See order form.

Due Benevolence: A Study of Biblical Sexuality

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

(#3775) Think you have read all that there is on the subject of sexuality from the Bible? Think again! Religious moralists have taken the wonderful gift of human beauty and sexuality and made it something dirty and sinful. Much is at stake regarding truth, as well as the nature and character of God Himself. A groundbreaking work providing ...

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- A breath of fresh air from the religious and Victorian mentality.
- A daring and valuable glimpse at the wonderful light just outside sexuality's prison-cell door.

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"A Revelation on every page!" — Martin Zender

"An incredible book." — WA

"Truly liberating." — PA

The primitive has passed by. Lo!, there has come new! (II Corinthians 5:17).

The transcendence of our being in Christ is that, in Him, we not only receive the blessings of His perfect work of redemption, not only are included in the death and the life of our Lord, but are also blessed with that which He, in His sublime dignity and glorious perfection now represents.

SEATED AMONG THE CELESTIALS

We are now seated among the Celestials in Him Who is at the right hand of God, and Who is the Head of all creation. Christ is not only the Head of His Body, the ecclesia, but of the entire Universe, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship in the Celestial realms. In this character, as Head over all, He has been given to the ecclesia as its Head (Ephesians 1:21-23).

With this exalted Christ and with His work of completing the entire Universe, we are now united with indissoluble ties, through our having been seated in Him in the Celestial realms, that we may, in the oncoming eons, display the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

Before the untraceable riches of Christ in His Celestial headship were revealed, this transcendent grace could not be made known. This it is which makes His glorious exaltation so precious to us.

What a masterpiece of divine grace! Our words fail to describe adequately the deeds of God in His Son. Would that we might continually look at the Anointed One, in order to comprehend what God has given us in Him. What glory He has poured out over us! Here is not minority but maturity. Not piece-work but perfection. Not shadow but essence; not want but superfluity. All of this is ours because of our completeness in Christ.

It is God Who does it all. We have been able to contribute nothing to it by helping Him. Our connection with the Head – our being in Christ – includes us in His perfection. Praise be to Him, Whose achievement we are, and Who has called us in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace and designated us beforehand for the place of a son, for Himself (Ephesians 1:5). **BSN**

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 51, 1960

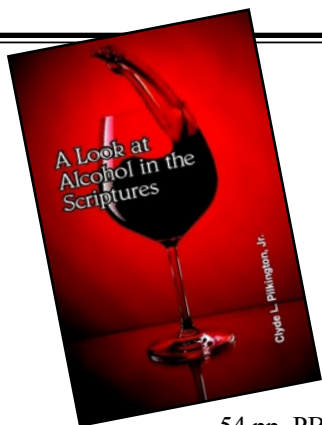
(abridged & edited)

Prolingheuer was an associate of A.E. Knoch from Unna, Germany. He was a part of the German Concordant Publishing Concern and author of *Can the Will of God Be Successfully Obstructed by His Creatures?*

TOPICS:

Major: Identification; Mystery; Paul's Epistles; Prison Epistles; Revelation; Right Division; Standing (of the Believer in Christ)

Minor: Maturity; Pleroo; Pleroma



54 pp, PB

See order form.

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.

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