

Bible Student's Notebook

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XI Issue 273

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

The Uniqueness of Your Journey

by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him (I Corinthians 12:18).

n our journey through this life, you and I may be at different places. Being at different places does not necessarily mean that either of us is "ahead" or "behind" of, or better off than, the other spiritually. It just means that the Lord needs to take us on different (and yet at the same time similar) paths due to the uniqueness of our personalities, upbringing and influences, as well as His Own unique purpose in our lives – all as it pleases Him.

In our diversities, He works all in all!

There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Who works all in all (I Corinthians 12:6).

Miles Stanford aptly wrote about this process:

So many of us, after having entered into some of the deeper realities of our Lord, immediately seek to pull or push others into this wonderful advancement; and then we wonder why they are so slow to learn and seemingly apathetic in their understanding and concern. We so easily forget the many years it took, and by what wandering wilderness ways our Lord had to traverse with us in order to bring us over Jordan and into Canaan.

God is active in your life, and in the lives of your brothers. You do not need to live a life filled with

care, frustration, discouragement and guilt concerning where the Father has you on your journey. You can by faith lay hold of the reality of *His Own* unique and personal workmanship in your life. Rest in *His* great workmanship. Be content with what *He* is accomplishing.

As We Began, So We Continue and Finish

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

Paul reminds you of what your walk with the Lord is all about:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Colossians 2:6).

You are to continue walking in divine life the same way you received it! How did you receive it?

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Bible Student's NotebookTM

Paul Our Guide - Christ Our Goal

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This weekly 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 forgiveness of 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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Stages of Spiritual Life

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3).

Every form of life that God has created has noticeable and predictable stages of growth. Spiritual growth is no exception. Awareness of these stages allows for a better understanding and a fuller appreciation of life.

Interestingly there are a number of similar patterns in all forms of life.

Early stages of spiritual growth often can be characterized by tremendous energy and acceleration of growth. Then there are periodic plateaus that take place along the way. This is the lesson of nature. We see these lulls clearly demonstrated with regularity:

- There is the night of the day –
 The daily recurring cycle of night
- There is the night of the month –
 The monthly recurring cycle of the moon
- There is the night of the year –

The yearly recurring cycle of winter

Our own spiritual growth occurs neither at the rate, nor by the methods that we sometimes imagine. Instead, God works steadily and effectually for His Own purpose. He is in no rush, as by human schedules. Though His divine work may not be done in accordance with our timetables, or by our predetermined methods or standards, He is nevertheless busy with His plan in our lives.

We should not be discouraged at the progress of Father's work in our spiritual growth, or of the seemingly unproductive plateaus. He is the Creator, we are His creatures. He is the Potter, we are His clay. He is the Workman, and we are His workmanship.

To everything there is a season ...

From the Editor

Dear Siblings,

Brotherly Greetings

I greet you all in the name of our loving and glorious Father. It is indeed a wonderful honor and privilege to be His children – to be brothers and sisters.

It is hard for me to believe that the end of the year is upon us. How amazingly quickly time flies. Oh, that God would teach us to number our days, because every day is indeed a wonderful gift from God!

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalms 90:12).

Your brother,

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Cong Process of Spiritual Growth by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance (Isaiah 32:17).

he Master Potter is faithfully and steadily at work in you. Make no mistake about it: He works all things after His Own will.

In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who works all things after the counsel of His Own will (Ephesians 1:11).

His hand in your life leaves *no* place untouched. Even that which seemingly is working against you is used by your Father to fulfill His Own good purpose in your life.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

This truth can be seen in the life of our Apostle. Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. The circumstances of his life had the appearance of working negatively – extremely negatively. Yet, he wrote with such confidence that the opposite was actually true:

But I would that you should understand, brothers, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12).

Another powerful example is demonstrated in the life of Joseph. The same was true with him. His brothers had sold him into slavery. This had been, upon the surface, a very sad and unfortunate turn of events; but Joseph saw a divine purpose:

But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good (Genesis 50:20).

At times God will even lead you through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but as long as He is with you, even the darkest, lowest valley is really the **higher** ground!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:4).

Paul experienced such gut-wrenching hardness, that at times he even "despaired of life,"

For we would not, brothers, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (II Corinthians 1:8).

However, he was quick to add,

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, **that** we should not trust in ourselves, **but in God** Who raises the dead (II Corinthians 1:9).

The fact is simple – you can trust God. He alone is truly trustworthy; and He has a definite goal in sight for you! Your Father is taking you on a journey that has as its final goal conformity unto Christ.

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).

To be conformed to the image of His Son is your predestination. To take you on this journey will mean many years of wilderness and valleys. His current goal is to bring you to a place where you find your completeness, satisfaction, contentment, glory, thanksgiving and rejoicing in Him alone, and not in your circumstances. This is what a walk of faith is all about: not saying, "Look, look ..." while you point to the circumstances all around you, but saying, "Look, look ..." while you point to your Lord and His cross. For Christ and His finished cross-work are the very object of the Father's eye; and so He is working to make them the object of yours as well.

Beholding and Becoming

by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3:17-18).

aul tells us that as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are changed into His image. This is the principle of what we might call beholding and becoming. As you BEHOLD Him, you are transformed into His image. This beholding and becoming is carried out and accomplished in the very details of your life. The Father is steadily at work in you, manifesting the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus He accomplishes this in the most difficult circumstances that life may throw at you. This is the great plan of God in your life.

BEHOLDING

The phrase "behold as in a glass" is actually but one single Greek word: *katoptrizomai*. This word means "to mirror oneself, I to see reflected" (Strong)¹, "to reflect, to mirror" (Vine)², "to behold one's self in a mirror" (Bullinger).³

In the context of II Corinthians 3 there is a striking contrast made. "Moses alone beheld and reflected Shekinah glory, we all behold and reflect the Lord's glory." (Bullinger)⁴

The "we all" of the Body of Christ, with our "open face" are contrasted with Moses' "veiled face." This veiling is that of Moses' Law, the unveiling is that of the freedom and liberty of grace.

We look into the "mirror" of God's Word⁵ as revealed to us by Paul the Apostle. It is there that we see the unveiled glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in His present position as the Head of the Body. This glory is "mirrored" back to us. We see the reflection of our own new image as members of His Body. We behold our own image in the glory of our Head. His glory is our new identity.⁶ Paul unveils the law, bringing us into the perfect liberty and freedom of seeing ourselves reflected as the Son.

- 1. James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.
- 2. W.E. Vine, Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.
- 3. E.W. Bullinger, *Critical Lexicon & Concordance to the English & Greek New Testament.*
- 4. E.W. Bullinger, The Companion Bible, page 1732.
- C.f. "a hearer of the word ... beholding his natural face in a glass" (James 1:23).
- 6. See the author's work, I Am Who and What God Says I Am

This is the *glorious* ministry of Paul.

[Paul] had no need of any covering, for the dispensation of the spirit is not like the law. The law led from glory to gloom. Grace leads from glory to glory. One deals out condemnation and death. The other dispenses righteousness and life. ...

Paul did not climb the steps of Sinai and bring back a transient reflection of the Lord's glory, as Moses did. He beheld Him continually, as we behold our faces in a mirror. The glory of the Lord radiated in him. It did not fade, but became brighter and brighter. Contemplation of the Lord led to the likeness of Him. This is a beautiful epitome of Paul's ministries. He began with grace on the road to Damascus. He dispenses justification at Pisidian Antioch. He reveals the conciliation to the Corinthians. He teaches the truth transcendent from his Roman prison. Grace upon grace and glory upon glory! His successive ministries led onward to the transcendent glories contained in his Perfection Epistles. (Knoch)⁷

We follow Paul to these glorious heights!⁸ Can you see yourself in Paul's revelation? Do you behold yourself as who he declares that you really are? Can you see the real you reflecting back "the glory of the Lord" as you look into the disclosure found of HIM in the writings of Paul?

BECOMING

The Father is transforming you, so that you are being "changed into the same image." This word "changed" is the Greek word metamorphoō from which we get our word "metamorphose," which Webster defines as, "to change into a different form; to transform." It appears three other times in the Greek Scriptures.

It is used twice of the Lord Jesus Christ's transfiguration:

(see **Beholding**, next page)

A.E. Knoch, Concordant Commentary on the New Testament, page 269.

^{8.} I Corinthians 4:15-17; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; II Timothy 3:10-14; Note carefully, these are not merely Paul's words, but God's inspired Word directed to us through Paul (I Corinthians 14:37).

Secondhand Faith

by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Do you have faith! Have it to yourself before God (Romans 14:22).

any, if not most of those in professing Christendom have secondhand "faith."

It can be a wonderful thing when others share their "faith" with us; but sadly much of what many "believe" was simply passed to them by others, untested and unproven. Their "faith" is not truly in God, nor in the Scriptures themselves, but in those who passed the information to them. The only way for faith to be truly ours is for us *ourselves* to go to the Scriptures themselves; to be personally convinced by them.

Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

Note carefully Paul's words, "Study to show your-self..." and earlier, "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God"

God has *called* us into an *individual* faith before Himself. No one has the right to tell us what to believe, to provide for us with creeds or doctrinal statements. Our faith is to be personal, without human constraint and manipulation.

Not for that we have dominion over your

BEHOLDING (continued from previous page)

And after six days Jesus takes with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leads them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was **transfigured** [metamorphoo] before them (Mark 9:2).

And was **transfigured** [metamorphoō] before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light (Matthew 17:2).

This same word is used by Paul in Romans chapter 12:

And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed [metamorphoo] by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2).

Just exactly what is this "change"? We are being TRANS-

faith, but are helpers of your joy: *for by faith* you stand (II Corinthians 1:24).

The walk of faith truly begins with freedom from the bondage of religious dominion, and finds its completion standing before God alone by personal faith. Embrace this true liberty; freedom *from* religion, to freedom *of* faith – the freedom to follow the faith that God gives you.

Being strong in such faith is what brings glory to the Father.

He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was **strong in faith**, giving glory to God (Romans 4:20).

Do not settle for secondhand "faith" – for that is not truly faith at all – or at least it is not faith in God and in His Word; it is merely faith in men and their words. We must not proceed merely by what we have heard, by what we have been taught, nor by our preconceived notions and supposition. God gives us a faith all our own so that we may know and believe first-hand what He has said; for faith is simply taking God at His Word.

Don't be caught up in the mimicry of a secondhand "faith." Dare to believe God and His Word for yourself!

FORMED "into the same image" of the Son. The Greek word for "image" is eikōn. Its usage by Paul the Apostle is very telling. He uses this word in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ being in the "image of God":

... Christ, Who is **the image** [eikōn] of God ... (II Corinthians 4:4).

... Who is **the image** [eikōn] of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15).

Then Paul uses this same word in reference to believers:

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to **the image** [eikon] of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).

(see **Becoming**, next page)

The Golden Rules of Bible Study

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed. rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

od has designed a certain way by which we are to study the Scriptures: We are to RIGHTLY DIVIDE them. This is the divinely approved approach to the study of His Word.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) articulated well the important principles of right division in the introduction to his 1535 English version of the Bible:

It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after. -Prologue to the Reader

We must be honest with ourselves when studying the Scriptures. Accurate Bible study must follow these simple principles, which have been termed by some as the "Golden Rules of Bible Study." When studying any passage we must ask ourselves some basic questions:

Who is doing the speaking? **To whom** is being spoken? **About what** is being spoken? When was it spoken? **What** is the context in which it was spoken?

Some proclaim, "All of the promises in the Book are mine!" This clearly is not true. For instance, God

difference!

BECOMING (continued from previous page)

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image [eikon] of the Heavenly (I Corinthians 15:49).

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image [eikon] of Him Who created him (Colossians 3:10).

The Lord Jesus Christ is in "the image of God," and you are being transformed into "the image of His Son."

The first principle of knowing who you *really* are is to look to Him, to know Him, to keep your eyes upon Him - for all that you are is "in Him."

promised a child to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. This was a specific promise, made to a specific couple, at a specific point in history. One simply can't claim this promise for themselves, context means everything.

Many are very careless in their approach to and use of the Scriptures. They just open up their Bibles to any page and expect what they read there to be directed toward them – that God will speak specifically to them.

Maybe you have heard the tale of the man who made the habit of randomly opening the Bible to a couple of passages in the Bible each morning for some insight and direction for this day. He would just let the Bible fall open where it would and aimlessly place his finger on a line of text. This particular day his finger fell on the line "[He] departed, and went and hanged himself." He flipped a little further in the Bible and placed his finger on another line which read "Go, and do thou likewise."

We must remember that while all of the Bible was written for us. it was not all written to us. nor was it all written **about** us. Thus, the Bible must be divided; and not just divided, but RIGHTLY divided. That is, we are to look for the many dividing marks (or distinctions) that God Himself has placed within Scripture. We must learn to make a difference where God makes a

Well did the hymn writer Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863-1961) pen (Glad Songs, 1922):

O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There's light for a look at the Savior, And life more abundant and free!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

But to him who works not, but believes on Him Who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

You began the divine life by grace through faith, without works, and Paul says this is the way you continue to walk in it.

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

The Galatian believers had fallen into the trap of believing they were somehow their own workmanship – that their life was of their own making, that they were somehow in control of their own small universe.

O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you: Did you receive the Spir-

it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3:1-3).

Again, Paul brings us to this basic principle of life: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

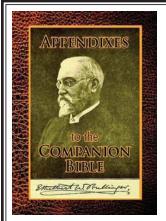
Rest, look and wait upon your Father. Let your *only* expectation be from Him, and you will never be disappointed!

My soul, wait ONLY upon God; for my **expectation is from Him** (Psalm 62:5).

But they who **wait upon the Lord** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

For the earnest **expectation** of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19).

Have complete confidence in God, your Father. Your journey is as unique as you are. What He began in you, He will see to its full completion. He will do it!



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