



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume XV
Issue 354

Where We're Going

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. – C.S. Lewis

All of us are designed to go somewhere. Father is preparing us to live out our distinct individuality in the consummation; He is preparing us for that place that will, in the end, fulfill all the definitive dreams of who He is now in the process of making us to be.



To Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending (CLT)

This understanding of Father and His plan, and our perfect place in it, was echoed with great discernment many years ago by A.P. Adams (1847-1925):

Every situation, every circumstance and every trial; every desire, every longing, every aspiration, every passion and every dream; every predisposition, every preference, every like, every fondness and every partiality; *all* are influencing, impressing, prompting, molding, plying and shaping us toward our ultimate place in Father's plan, where all that makes us who and what we are finds its fulfillment – on the deepest, most intimate, personal and individual level.

When Father brings us to this place for which we are being made, we will fully *recognize* it. It will be the culmination of all that we have ever wanted or desired – all that Father has ever molded into us to want and long for – all that makes us *His* unique self.

So suited to perfection is this place that we will intrinsically know that it is *His* place uniquely designed for us – and us for it. It will leave nothing ever built into us unfulfilled. We will *immediately* know this place – for we will finally be “home.”

To Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

God has a definite purpose in the creation of everything – a definite end in view – and that end is certain to be reached sooner or later. In other words, every creature ultimately fulfills the purpose of the Creator in its creation. For us to suppose otherwise would be to suppose a failure on the part of the Creator, which is unthinkable. The believer's attitude toward God then might be thus expressed:

God has created me for a definite purpose. That purpose I shall ultimately fulfill in His economy. It is a wise and good purpose, one with which I should be perfectly satisfied and contented if I only understood it all. Toward that end I am continually moving. All things tend to advance me in that one direction, and I shall surely arrive. I shall surely fulfill the purpose of my creation.

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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).

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The Treasure, the Vessel and the Power

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (II Corinthians 4:7).

The one object of the Epistles to the Corinthians is to turn away the mind and the thoughts from the agents whom God condescends to use, and to direct the attention to Him Who uses them, and sends the message.

While the Apostle magnifies his office, he yet speaks of himself as nothing.

“We preach not ourselves” (II Corinthians 4:5) is the burden of the immediate context.

THE TREASURE

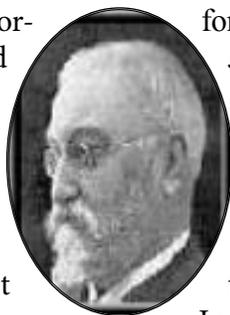
We have nothing that we have not received (I Corinthians 4:7). Whoever the agent may be, whether the greatest or the least according to human reckoning, he is still only a “vessel,” more or less filled with God's treasure.

What this treasure was in the case of the Apostles we are told in Acts 26:16.

I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.

The word translated “minister” means “a servant” – not a slave or domestic servant, but one acting under another, as a musician would act under the baton of the “conductor.”

The figure *Hendiadys* is used to designate the kind of servant spoken of. Paul was to be a servant – yea, a witnessing servant. Service is of many kinds; but the special service referred to here is that of witnessing



for God. This is the treasure. The word “treasure” is not intended to express its value in the eyes of him who has it, but to show the intrinsic value and blessedness of the thing itself.

According to :4 it is the illumination with the good news connected with Christ's glory. In :6 it is the illumination with the knowledge of God's glory.

It is this divine illumination which is the treasure; and it is the gift of God. Just as “God commanded the light to shine out of darkness” (II Corinthians 4:6), so it is He Who has shined in our hearts with the illumination of the knowledge of His glory, as seen in the person of Christ.

His grace is indeed a treasure, but glory enhances its value. Grace is the flower, glory is the fruit. The one is an earnest of the other. Many who have heard and know the *Gospel of the Grace of God* know but little of this *Gospel of the Glory*. The reason for this is because grace concerns ourselves, but the glory concerns Christ. We, with our natural selfishness, are occupied with that which has to do with ourselves, and are too ready to think little of that which concerns Christ.

He who came in grace is coming in glory. The good news concerns both. It is “the glory of His grace” (Ephesians 1:6).

The witness of this treasure is committed to “earthen vessels” (II Corinthians 4:7).

THE VESSEL

Among men, a valuable treasure is put into a valuable vessel; but not so with this treasure. It is committed to *perishing vessels of clay*. God's eye is on His treasure. His purpose is to display and make known the treasure, not the vessel. In this case, it is not so much the vessel containing the treasure, but the treasure fulfilling the vessel and displaying its glory through the contrast with the vessel. Therefore we are immediately shown in the next two verses (:8-9) how the vessel is humbled and kept humble, so that the treasure and the power might be seen to *"be of God, and not of us."*

*We are troubled on every side,
yet not distressed
We are perplexed,
But not in despair;
Persecuted,
But not forsaken;
Cast down,
But not destroyed.*

The utter worthlessness and frailness of the creature is declared; and we are shown that it is entirely a matter of condescension on the part of Almighty God that He sends any message at all, and that He sends it by whom He will.

In I Corinthians 3:5 we find Paul asking,

Who then is Paul ... even as the Lord gave to every man.

In I Corinthians 1:26, we have another Scripture

which, we believe, is marred by the common misinterpretation,

Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

This shows how the *"weakness of God is stronger than men"* (:25), *i.e.*, in His choice of weak instruments to witness for Him, His strength is magnified.

Weakness is our *"calling"* by God. The form of the word signifies *the divine act of calling*, and refers to the act and manner of the way in which God had called them: by having chosen,

The foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen (to call you) – yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are (:27-28).

Why has God thus chosen to act? Why has He thus chosen small, weak and despised instruments to carry out His work and proclaim His message? In order, he adds,

That no flesh should glory in His presence (:29).

Why has He chosen to put this wondrous treasure into *earthen vessels*? He at once tells us:

That the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us (II Corinthians 4:7).

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THE POWER

The vessel which contains this treasure is a weak “earthen vessel,” that “*the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*”

Thus there is a *power* working, as well as a *treasure shining*: a manifestation of power working through a poor earthen vessel.

Truly, it is written in II Corinthians 10:4-5,

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.

It is when we realize the weakness of the vessel that we see the necessity for this “*power.*”

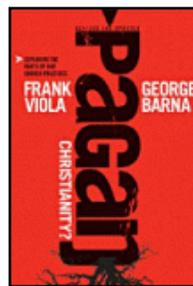
This is the one thing needful today. There is plenty of learning and human wisdom; plenty of the energy of the flesh in using and devising of all sorts of novel methods to influence men; but all is in vain without this “*power from on high.*”

Effort is put forth, ingenuity is taxed, new tricks and contrivances are employed, every device is used to persuade men, and make what we may call “persuaded Christians”; but without the excellency of this power, which is of God, all will be vain – and only for time, instead of eternity; and much of it for a very little, even of *time.*

Men by their own power may turn “the churches” upside down: but we need that “*power*” which would make weak, and unknown, and insignificant, and humble men “*turn the world upside down*” (Acts 17:6).

We were recently in a town where a new tram service was being installed. All seemed to be in readiness. The lines were laid; the posts were set up; the overhead wires were fixed; the cars were standing; and we asked, “What are they waiting for?” The answer was, “Power.” The “power house” was not yet finished.

Ah! This it is in spiritual things. It is “*power*” that is needed. All else may be there, all that human skill



Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices

by — Frank Viola & George Barna

(#3106) 293 pages, Paperback
\$17.95 (\$21.70 with s&h)

Have you ever wondered why Christians do what they do for “church” every Sunday morning? Have you ever asked yourself any of the following questions: Why do folks “dress up” for “church”? Why does the “pastor” preach a sermon every Sunday? Why are there pulpits and pews? Why “church” buildings, steeples, choirs and seminaries? Where did all of these things come from?

This book proposes that what Christians do in “churches” has no root in the Scriptures! It rather has its origin in pagan culture. As shocking as that sounds, the authors prove their points by documenting every claim they make.

Fully footnoted, *Pagan Christianity* documents the story of modern church practices. If you are content with status quo “churchianity,” then you will not want to read this book. It is reserved for those who are ready to embark on an eye-opening venture that challenges every aspect of their church experience.

www.StudyShelf.com/ChurchHis.htm

can make, and human wisdom devise; but, if there is no “*power from on high,*” it is all in vain.

This divine power is *all-sufficient*: its excellency or surpassingness is emphasized. It surpasses all human possibilities, and excels all human imagination. It is that which causes the Word of God to work effectually in the heart, and brings men to see what he never saw before. It, and it alone, can make us love what we once hated, and hate what we once loved.

When we think of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of convincing even a friend on a small point on which we may differ, and then think of the conviction of an enemy and converting him into a friend, who will lay down his life for his gracious conqueror, then we can form some idea of the surpassingness of this power which God puts forth.

Then we can understand why it is that God commits this “*treasure*” to, and will use, only these “*earthen vessels.*” It is that the “*power*” may be seen and known to “*be of God, and not of us.*” ■

The Blessing of Quietness

by — J.R. Miller (1840-1912)

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

Quietness, like mercy, is twice blessed: it blesses him who is quiet, and it blesses the man's friends and neighbors. Talk is good in its way. "There is a time to speak," but there is also "a time to be silent," and in silence many of life's sweetest blessings come.

An Italian proverb says, "He who speaks does sow; he who holds his tongue does reap." We all know the other saying which rates *speech as silver* – and *silence as gold*.

SCRIPTURE EXHORTATIONS TO QUIETNESS

"Study to be **quiet**" (I Thessalonians 4:11), writes the apostle Paul. "Busybodies" he exhorts to "**quiet working, they may eat their own bread.**" Prayers are to be made for rulers "that we may lead a **quiet and peaceable life**" (I Timothy 2:2).

Peter, writing to women, speaks of their true adornment:

*You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and **quiet spirit, which is so precious to God*** (I Peter 3:4).

Solomon rates quietness in a home far above the best of luxuries:

*Better a dry crust with peace and **quiet** – than a house full of feasting, with strife* (Proverbs 17:1).

Isaiah declares the secret of power in these words:

*In **quietness and confidence shall be your strength*** (Isaiah 30:15).

Likewise he says,

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

Quietness is set down also as one of the blessings of God's people, that they shall dwell in "*quiet resting places.*"

These are but a few of very many scriptural statements concerning quietness – but they are enough to indicate several lessons that we may profitably consider.

SILENCE TOWARD GOD

We should be quiet toward God. The expression "Rest in the Lord," in one of the Psalms, is in the margin "*Be silent to the Lord.*" We are not to speak back to God. We are not to dispute with Him, but are to bow in silent and loving acquiescence before Him:

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

It is in those providences which cut sorely into our lives, and require sacrifice and loss on our part, that we are especially called to this duty.

Silence to God should be our attitude in all times of trial, when God's ways with us are bitter and painful. Why should we complain at anything that our Father may do? We have no right to utter a word of murmuring, for He is our sovereign Lord, and our simple duty is instant, unquestioning submission.

We have no reason to complain, for we know that all of God's dealings with us are in loving wisdom. His will is always best for us, whatever sacrifice or suffering it may cost.

QUIETNESS SOMETIMES CARRIED TOO FAR

There are, of course, times when we should speak, and when words are mighty and full of blessing. Universal silence would not be a blessing to the world. Among the most beneficent of God's gifts to us is the power of speech. We are to use our tongues. There are some people who are altogether too quiet in certain directions, and toward certain people.

People keep in their hearts unspoken the kindly words they might utter, and ought to utter, in the ears of the weary, the soul-hungry and the sorrowing about them. The *ministry of good words* is one of wondrous power, yet many of us are misers, with our gold and silver coin of speech. Often we allow hearts to starve close beside us, though in our very hands we have abundance to feed them.

One who attends the funeral of any ordinary man and listens to what his neighbors have to say about him as they stand by his coffin, will hear enough kind words

spoken to have brightened whole years of his life. How was it when the man was living, toiling and struggling, among these very people? Ah! they were not so faithful then with their grateful, appreciative words. They were too quiet toward him then. Silence was overdone.

Quietness is carried too far when it makes us disloyal to the hearts that crave our words of love and sympathy.

HONORABLE QUIETNESS TOWARD OTHERS

There is a quietness toward others which all should cultivate. There are many words spoken which ought never to pass the *door of the lips*. There are people who seem to exercise no restraint whatever on their speech. They allow every passing *thought* or *feeling* to take form in *words*. They never think about what the effect of their words will be – how they will fly like arrows shot by some careless marksman and will pierce hearts they were never meant to hurt! Thus friendships are broken and injuries are inflicted which can never be repaired!

Careless words are forever making grief and sorrow in tender spirits. We pity the mute whom sometimes we meet. *Muteness* is more blessed by far than *speech*, if all we can do with our marvelous gift is to utter bitter, angry, abusive or sharp, cutting words.

I heedlessly opened the cage
 And suffered my bird to go free,
 And, though I besought it with tears to return,
 It nevermore came back to me.

It nests in the wildwood and heeds not my call;
 Oh, the bird once at liberty – who can enthrall?
 I hastily opened my lips
 And uttered a word of disdain

That wounded a friend, and forever estranged
 A heart I would die to regain.
 But the bird once at liberty – oh who can enthrall?
 And the word that's once spoken – oh who can recall?

Rose Cooke, in *Unreturning*, shows in very strong phrase the irreparableness of the harm done or the hurt given by unkind words.

Flowers fade – but there will be more flowers another year just as sweet ones, too, as those that are gone.

Snow melts and disappears – but it will snow again.

Dew vanishes when the sun rises – but tomorrow

morning there will be other dewdrops as brilliant as those which are lost.

But *words* once uttered – can never be said over to be changed, nor can they ever be gotten back.

Another kind of common talk that had better be left to silence is the miserable gossip which forms so large a part – let us confess it and deplore it – of ordinary living room conversation! Few appreciative and kindly things are spoken of absent ones, but there is no end to criticism, snarling and backbiting!

The most unsavory bits of *scandal* are served with relish, and no pure character is armored against the virulence and maliciousness of the tongues that chatter on as innocently and casually as if they were telling sweet stories of good.

It certainly would be infinitely better if all of this kind of speech was reduced to utter silence. Oh for the gift of silence when we have nothing *good* or *beautiful* to say. No victories should be more heroically battled for, or more thankfully recorded, than victories of *silence* when we are tempted to speak unhallowed words of others!

THE HOLY ART OF SILENCE

Silence is better, also, than any words of bickering and strife. There is no surer, better way of preventing quarrels than by the firm restraining of speech. “*A soft answer turns away anger*” (Proverbs 15:1), but if we cannot command the “*soft answer*” when another person is angry, the second-best thing is not to speak at all.

Grievous words stir up anger.

Many a long, fierce strife that has produced untold pain and heart-breaking would never have been anything more than a momentary flash of anger if one of the parties had practiced *the holy art of silence*.

Many men have owed their reputation for great wisdom quite as much to their *silence* as to their *speech*. They have not spoken the many foolish things of the shallow talker, and have uttered only few and well-considered words. The *power of keeping quiet* would be worth a great deal to many people whose tongues are forever betraying their ignorance and revealing their true character.

THE QUIETNESS OF FAITH

Faith gives a *quietness* which, in itself, is one of life's holiest blessings. It gives the quietness of peace – a quiet-

(see *QUIETNESS*, next page)



QUIETNESS (continued from previous page)

ness which the wildest storms cannot disturb, which is a richer possession than all of the world's wealth or power.

“Study to be quiet” (I Thessalonians 4:11). This lesson may be hard for many of us, but it is well worth all of the cost of learning. It brings strength and peace to the heart.

Speech is good, but often *silence* is better. He who has learned to hold his tongue is a greater conqueror than the

GOING (continued from front page)

It is a great satisfaction and pleasure to think of our relationship to God in this light; for God has something in His mind to make of me, and I shall surely become that something. Furthermore, since God is wise and good, that something will please and satisfy me perfectly. When I reach the place for which God created me, and for which He has fitted me, then I shall have no regrets that it is not another place. I shall realize that it is my place and shall be *satisfied*, perfectly satisfied with the accomplishment of the ever blessed and good will of God *in me*.

I am a seed, destined to a certain result ultimately. The seed may pass through many adversities in reaching that result, like the seed in the hand of an Egyptian mummy lying dormant for a thousand years, but still its end is fixed, and that end it will reach, and none other.

warrior who subdues an empire (cf. Proverbs 16:32)! The power to be silent under provocations and wrongs – and in the midst of danger and alarms – is the power of the noblest, most royal victoriousness.

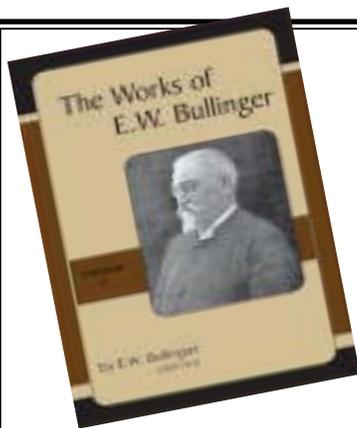
1888

(The Best of J.R. Miller Volume 1 is available at StudyShelf.com) ■

I may be disappointed many times in failing to be what I would *like* to be, and what I *imagine* I might have been, and so my experience will correspond to the poet's words, “Of all sad words by tongue or pen, The saddest are these – it might have been.” Even this experience is a part of my training, and by it I am continually being advanced toward what, in the providence of God, I *am to be*.

Thus may the trusting child *rest in God* both for himself and for the *whole creation*, and with the utmost confidence he may commit all of his interests to Him “*as unto a faithful Creator*” (I Peter 4:19).¹ ■

1. An abridged excerpt from Arthur P. Adams' excellent work, *The Purposes of God and the True Basis of Redemption*, (Bible Student's Press, available from StudyShelf.com).



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