
-STUDIES IN EPHESIANS-

#19

Before going on with a further study of this great epistle to us Gentiles, it might be well to pick out a key verse or verses which will give the theme and scope of the book as a whole. As we look, we find that none will fill this requirement so well as 1:3, 4. You might find a better passage.

1. Blessing or praise is first given to "the GOD and FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ." I suppose that at first that most of you would take it for granted that God and Father are the same in extent. Are they? God is a term that is limitless in all its ramifications. He has not been seen by mortal eye. He cannot be comprehended by mortal mind. He has condescended to reveal something of Himself to man. Father is one aspect of that revelation. Son is another. And Holy Spirit is still another. So God is an unlimited expression: Father a limited one.

2. The God and Father has blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings in the heavenly PLACES. These are not the earthly blessings promised to Abraham. This is not being blessed with faithful Abraham as were Gentiles in the Acts period (Gal. 3). Not only are these not earthly blessings, but they are not to be received on the earth. They are to be received in the heavenlies. They can be enjoyed in prospect and in shadow now. But we have little, if any, idea of what they may be like.

3. Those so blessed are those who have been chosen in Christ from before the overthrow of the world (kosmos). No others of any age or dispensation have this high hope. This marks the time when the first revelation is given concerning a purpose and its outworking in the heavenlies. The scene of operations in the final restoration of the world (kosmos) now shifts from the earth to the heavenlies. This is now the place of warfare (Eph. 6:12). It will culminate in the final overthrow of the rebel and his rebellion in the heavenlies (Rev. 12:9-12) and Christ taking over the supreme and sole rule in those places.

4. "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Ere Lucifer fell because of his pride and presumption, yes, even before he caused the overthrow, God had already chosen another race to stand before Him in love, spotless, taking the place of those about to fall from their high estate.

These 4 things cover the scope of the book and give us its theme. If we will but keep them in mind, the rest of the epistle will fall in place and explain itself.

-SLAVES AND THE PRIZE-

At the time of Paul the slave had a very hard time of it. He was no more than an ox or a sheep in the master's estimation. The common alley cat in our country has more protection by law than the slave did then. The master could torture a slave or take his life at will with no one to question it. If a slave should kill his master, then it was the law that all the slaves under the master's roof at that time should be killed. History tells of an instance of this kind in which over 400 persons were killed. Slaves could not marry or have family life. They were bred like livestock. One man was known to have had as many as 20,000 slaves at one time. Sometimes the slaves were better educated than the masters. Greek slaves were school teachers for Roman children. At times slaves far outnumbered the population of citizens. Curiously, as the slave population increased, economic conditions became worse. That is still true today.

We must keep these facts in mind, especially when we read the letter of Paul to Philemon. When we know what could have happened to Onesimus, then we can really understand why Paul wrote as he did.

But there is another place where we can think of the poor slave population of the time and the contrasts that might be made. In Phil. we read that our Lord divested Himself of His glory and was in the form or office of a bond-slave. In fact, He could not have been hanged on the tree if it were not for that condition. Paul, being a Roman citizen, could not have been executed in such a manner. Such a death was only for alien criminals and slaves. What a comfort to the slaves of that time when they learned that their Lord and Savior died the very death which haunted the dreams of many a one of them.

At the end of Phil. we find that there are members of Caesar's household who salute the brethren. It is very likely that most of these were slaves. Yet in this letter Paul is talking of the prize of the high calling. It is within reach of the poorest slave. What a glorious message that must have been to them! Many a one of them may have been faithful unto a crown. Many a one of higher estate may have missed the crown as an ashamed workman. The day will declare it.

Here is a definite challenge for you and me. We know nothing of slavery as those folks did. We have rights. Among those are the right to hear and read the gospel of our salvation. Do we strive for the prize of the high calling? Where will we stand?

-HEARERS AND DOERS-

"And, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

How true this can be of the "song service" or the oratorio, cantata, or anthem. The ear may be regaled by the beauty of the sound, but the heart utterly refuse the proper impression of the sense that is conveyed to it. The natural man may be so overpowered by the sentiments that he may weep with such a tenderness, and to kindle with such a transport, and to glow with such an elevation as may one and all carry upon them the semblance of sacredness.

But all too often this semblance deceives him. The very fact that his emotions have been aroused by a song, or even a sermon, may cause him to think that this is a true Christian experience. And with all the weeping, or the shouting, or the ecstasy within, he can go out from the meeting as carnal and unregenerate as he ever was and soon forget the song with all its loveliness and engage in the pursuits of the world with the same old uncrucified temper. He is as dead in trespasses and sins as he ever was.

This emotional outburst in a religious assemblage may mean no more than a taste for beautiful scenery, a taste for painting, or even a taste for the sensualities of epicurism. Like a parrot he may give out a great wordy testimony while under the influence, but he turns to the world and the glow abandons him; and the words he has heard and even said, he doeth them not!

Alas! there have been too many who have taken an academic interest in dispensational truth and the Word rightly divided; but it has remained strictly academic. They follow the flowery words of some leader or the ideas of some faction, but have never become doers of the Word. Not knowing the truth experimentally, they do not realize that truth does not need defending, and so they go to it hammer and tongs fighting and backbiting in pretense of defending the truth. Such an exhibition of carnality has turned many a person from making an examination of the working of 2 Tim. 2:15. They turn with disgust from any association with such. They do not know that those who wield the carnal sword do so in defense of some ideas that they may have or of a system they may subscribe to. So truth receives a bad name.

"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." You can hear the song and soon forget it. The same is true of the hearing of the Word.

-THE ONLY ESCAPE-

Either Satan was present or he had an agent on hand when our first parents were put on probation in the garden. At any rate, he was pretty sure that if he could bring in disobedience and the death that was sure to follow, he would have foiled God's plan to restore the ranks left vacant by himself and his followers, both in the heavens and in the earth.

Satan was pretty sure of what death was. It had come upon him and the angels that fell with him and the sentence was only to be carried out at some future date. He knew that he could not escape the sentence, unless God would in some way change His plans. He also knew that once he had died, that was the end of him. He knew that death was a thing that was final. He knew of no way in which it could be overcome or by which it might be escaped once one was in it.

This was then a chance for a bold stroke by Satan. If he thwarted God's plans, it just might be that God might consent to a conference and bargain with him. He might be able to make a trade of some kind for his life. You can see that if such a thing were done, it would involve the righteousness of God. For how could He be righteous and bargain with the author of sin?

The temptation was made and it succeeded very well. But Satan received a terrible setback in his plans. God had a plan by which man could be retrieved from death and yet in no way alter His righteousness. This problem is treated in Paul's epistle to the Romans. The question is how that God can be just and at the same time the justifier of the ungodly.

Evidently Satan did not know anything about resurrection. He himself can never experience it, for he has no kinsman Redeemer. He still hoped for a change in the plan of redemption up till the very last. He tried tempting the last Adam in the wilderness. He made his final attack in the garden. But God did not change His plans.

So a way was opened for man to escape from death via resurrection, if he only will choose to do so. This way was first opened to our first parents in the gospel of Gen. 3:15. Today it is for "whosoever" of John 3:16. Those who will not receive it as a gift will perish as surely and unretrievedly as will Satan some day.

We should praise Him who has worked out a plan by which His glory will be restored and at the same time be the justifier of the ungodly. We should all realize that His way is our only hope.

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-TRACKS THRU ACTS- #2

If you really want to get the drift of the events of Acts, you will need to study two miracles that were performed in that time and which had prophetic import. The one is the first miracle by Peter in chapters 3 and 4. The other is the first miracle by Paul in chapter 13.

1. So few people ever expect their own prayers to be answered that they never think that maybe the Lord's prayer on Calvary might have been answered and that the Jews might have been given another chance. But such was the case. In the re-proclamation of the kingdom to Israel comes this miracle and its lesson at the very beginning. The man was helpless. But when HEALED, he went to the temple walking and leaping and praising God. This was typical of Israel's restoration when they will be HEALED and then shall the lame man leap as an hart. If Israel was to fulfil her destiny and be a nation of priests as well as a peculiar treasure, she would need the HEALING which alone could come from this Jesus of Nazareth. So reading the notes in the Companion Bible, we can come to this rendering of Acts 4:12 "Neither is there healing in any other. For there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be healed." The constant message to the Jew during Acts was that the coming of the Lord and times of refreshing would come only upon repentance of the nation.

2. Now turning to Paul's first miracle we find that a Jew has tried to hinder the believing of a Gentile. It is also interesting to note that the name of the Gentile was Paulus, the Latin form of Paul. Also in connection with this was the beginning of calling Saul of Tarsus, Paul. Note that Paul's first Gentile convert calls for him just as Peter's first Gentile convert called for him. See too, that in the first miracle we read that Peter fastened his eyes on the man. Paul set his eyes upon the sorcerer. Peter pronounced a blessing. Paul pronounced a curse. The curse was that a season of blindness should come upon the Jew. When blindness came upon the Jew, then the ruler, a Gentile, believed. Can you not see how prophetic this is? If you will compare with the end of Acts you will find there that blindness is come upon the Jews and that the salvation is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear (believe).

Now read these over again very carefully and you will be able to add many more facts we do not have space to tell. But you have the skeleton of the book in these events.

DEAR YOUNG FOLKS: Just a few days ago, as I was looking thru my library, I pulled out a book by A. B. Bruce entitled "The Training of the Twelve." I noticed that some time I had jotted down some page numbers in the front, so looked them up again. Quite often, when marking passages in a book, I jot down the number of the page in the front for quick reference. Try this in your own study and then you will have right at hand some of those things you can never remember when you want to.

Here is one of the passages I had marked and I pass it on to you as worthy of some consideration. You are always making a choice as to your future. There are things to be taken into consideration when making the choice. If you determine to stand for truth, you should know something of the price you will have to pay. But Mr. Bruce says, "All great actors in God's cause, whose fruit remains, are sure to be more or less men of sorrow. To be hated and evil entreated is one of the penalties of moral greatness and spiritual power; or, to put it differently, one of the privileges Christ confers on His "friends." Hatred is very hard to bear, and the desire to escape it is one main cause of unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness. Good men shape their conduct so as to keep out of trouble, and through excess of cowardly prudence degenerate into spiritual nonentities."

You take your choice. You take your talent and go out into the world and develop it with considerable trouble and inconvenience to yourself and your own desires. Or you bury that talent and live your life to suit yourself, avoiding all unnecessary trouble and annoyance. But such a life becomes an apologetic one and so one has to be forever making excuses. Did you ever notice that the servant who hid his talent was the most talkative? He had a guilty feeling and had not only to excuse himself before his master, but also to his own mind and conscience.

But the men who used their talents did not need to talk very much. Their work spoke for them. They had much greater satisfaction in the long run than the one who tried to get away from all responsibility.

In charting your future course, you will have to take all these things into consideration. What you choose now will determine your course of action and you goal later on. It may be that already you are slipping into the little habits of evasion, not facing the music. Maybe you are not quite honest in everything. Be careful! Danger ahead!

Sincerely in HIM,

- THE EDITOR'S DESK -

APOLOGY is first of all due the young folks. I did not get their page lined and forgot my signature on their letter. *C. M. B.*

MR. WELCH is still going as per schedule. Last heard from them at Los Angeles at this writing. We are getting some very good reports concerning the meetings where he has been.

VISITORS: From now on we will omit this item and keep it confidential as we do the correspondence in our files.

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FREE: We still have some of the books on Structure in the Scripture by Andrew H. Morton which you may have for the asking. Also a few copies of Reconciliation by Charles H. Welch, free also.

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COMPLETE SET of current publications of Charles H. Welch including Vols. 34, 35, 36, and 37 of the Berean Expositor for only \$22 postpaid. This will furnish you with many hours of Bible study materials.

- TAPE NEWS -

The following duplicates of recordings of Mr. Welch on his present tour are now available for either loan or sale;

#XW1. Bremen. Warsaw Afternoon.

#XW2. Warsaw Evening. Hobart.

#XW3. Indianapolis, May 3 and 4.

In addition to the list last month, we now have;

#6. Paraphrase of Col. and Philemon by Lightfoot. Reading by your editor.

Don't forget to mention the speed of your recorder when sending for tapes.

Our tape recording department is not in smooth working order yet, so please be a little patient with us till we get better organized for this part of the work.

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Vol. 1 Thy Testimonies	2.00
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