

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #55

## STEPS TO A GOAL #5

IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY BE MIGHTY ENOUGH TO GRASP TOGETHER WITH ALL SAINTS, WHAT (IS) THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND DEPTH AND HEIGHT. TO KNOW EVEN THAT WHICH SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE .. THE LOVE OF CHRIST. (Eph. 3:18, 19. The translation by Charles H. Welch)

We make much of the love of God the Father and quote John 3:16 to support it, but all too often we forget the love of God the Son. Here in this passage this aspect is brot forward in a striking manner. In the practical section of the epistle it is again revealed, but limited to the church.

The love of Christ is broad enough to include both Jew and Gentile, the far off and the nigh, great and small, rich and poor, young and old, and all other distinctions that man makes. We are ever amazed at the wonderful plan of God for salvation of men in that it makes its terms equally available for all. And so it is with the dispensation of the mystery. It is open to both Jew and Gentile. This is especially appreciated by those who realize that at one time the Gentile was outside and far off and was in need of reconciliation.

When we consider the length of the love of Christ we can only measure it by the ages. There is nothing definite about that for we do not know much about the ages. But we find here in this epistle that the members of the church of the mystery were chosen before the overthrow of the world. Who knows how long ago that was? But we also find that kindnesses will be shown even in the ages to come. How long is that going to be in the future?

That love was so deep that it could stoop down and lift up children of wrath. He took us out of the pit and the miry clay and set our feet on the rock, establishing our way. If you want to get some picture of that great depth, read the first chapter of Romans.

The height is equally incomprehensible to us. It speaks of far above all principality and power, far above all heavens, and like expressions. The poor Gentile, once an outcast, now seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father far above all power, might, and rule.

At first thot, our text seems to be a little contradictory. Imagine praying that we might comprehend something that is incomprehensible, or that we might know something that is impossible to know! But there is a little catch to it which we may not find. It is true that we may never completely know or comprehend all of it, but on the other hand we can learn a lot with the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit of that which is utterly out of the range of mere human knowledge. That is what is hinted at here. We have to be strengthened by might (the power that raised Christ from the dead) in the inner man in order to comprehend all this.

Also as we learn to know our own weakness and deficiency before God, so much the better can we begin to realize the love that has been manifested at Calvary in the shed blood of Christ that we might live and be with Him.

There are very few Christians who do not know and realize that God has a program which has for its purpose the restoration of the ruin brot about by the fall of Adam. They are aware that by this one man came sin into mankind and by sin death. So evangelists and missionaries are everywhere busy preaching the remedy.

But what so few do not realize is that long ages before there was another fall or overthrow which involved more than just this earth and which did not touch mankind. So few have looked into this truth that it is practically unknown. In fact, to teach that there has been a fall that has involved more than this earth and mankind is rank heresy in most quarters.

One phase of the great mystery which had been hid in God from ages and generations until revealed about 60 A.D. was that God was now taking out a people which had been chosen before that overthrow that He might use them in the restoration of the ruin wrought in the heavenly places by the fall of Lucifer and 1/3 of the angelic beings. There are many who would contradict this truth and would misread the Scriptures to nullify it. Could it be that they do not want a perfect creation? Are they on friendly terms with the enemy and seek to avert his destruction? We cannot fathom the motive, but we know that somehow there is opposition to the idea that God is planning to heal the rent wrought by the overthrow of Gen. 1:2.

When this great plan of restoration is put into effect, God has a company chosen before the overthrow to accomplish it. When this great heavenly program is completed, then Christ will rule with His saints where Satan once held sway. Man is so busy contemplating what he can get out of the future that he fails to think on what problems God may have and the extent of the ruin that once engulfed the whole creation.

So God has a plan and purpose for the earth and its restoration. The bulk of the Bible is concerning that phase. All the OT speaks of it. All of the NT speaks of it until we come to the epistle to the Ephesians. Here for the first time we are brot face to face with the problem of the restoration of the universe, the whole creation. Six other epistles were written after Acts which are related in some way to this program. But the main ones which bring out the secret purpose are Eph., Phil., Col., and 2 Tim.

Those who mind earthly things, whose minds and affections are set on the things of the earth, are not good material for use in this program of restoring the heavenlies. One can fall in love with this world so much that he will never wish to leave it, even for something far better. So one must learn to love Christ and the things above that he will willingly turn his back on the things of this world and long for something far better. Those who have accepted citizenship in the heavenlies are only strangers and pilgrims on this terrestrial globe. They can never be satisfied until they have reached their chosen home, there to be manifested with Him in His glory.

## WHITHER I GO, YE CANNOT COME

## THE REWARD OF DISOBEDIENCE

You will find the words of our title in John 8:22. The Lord is speaking. He is speaking to Pharisees (verse 13). He is speaking to men who did not know Christ nor the Father. They would die in their sins. So we do not wonder that they cannot go where He is going. Not many would argue the point. The Lord even said that they did not know where He was going. That is rather strange considering the fact that these Pharisees were the Fundamentalists of the day and believed in the Scriptures and resurrection, or at least professed that they did. It is evident that the Lord meant more than going to death in this passage. They all could do that much.

But we are surprised that in John 13:33 the Lord says exactly the same words to the disciples that He had said to the Pharisees. He said plainly to them, WHITHER I GO, YE CANNOT COME.

But first, where is it that the Lord is going? He was to depart out of this world to the Father (13:1). He was to go to God (13:3). He has ascended up to heaven (3:13). He is to ascend up where He was before (6:62). He was to go to Him that has sent Him (8:33, 34).

In contrast to these we find in 14:2, 3 the Lord telling the disciples that He is going to prepare a place for them, that He would come again and receive them unto Himself so that where He was they might be also. In John 17:24 the Lord is expecting the disciples to be where He is going to be.

The first thread we take up to unravel this mystery is the PLACE PREPARED. We find it in Rev. 21. It is the New Jerusalem. It is to be on the earth, not in heaven. It has the names of the 12 engraved on its foundations. We know also that these 12 are to be with the Lord in the Millennium here on the earth helping in the Great Commission. This just about explains the whole thing.

The conclusion then is that the disciples are never going to heaven. Their hope is the kingdom here on earth followed by the New Jerusalem in the new earth. The Lord will be present in both these places, so then they will be with Him.

Paul spoke of the same hope. In 1 Thess. 4 he speaks of the coming of the Lord who is the resurrection to the believing dead and the life to the believing who are living. The Lord comes to set up the kingdom here on earth and so they shall ever be with the Lord.

But in John 13:36 we may be puzzled a little at first by what is said to Peter. Peter wants to know where the Lord is going. The answer is that Peter cannot follow now, but will later. It is a matter of following Him somewhere. In John 21:18, 19 we may find the answer to this one. There Peter is told what kind of death he should experience. Then the Lord said, FOLLOW ME. Peter did follow the Lord later in death. But we have no evidence that he has yet followed the Lord in resurrection, or that anybody has, for that matter.

So we see that the Lord never revealed to the 12 anything of the plan for the heavenlies and their restoration. That was still a secret.

Altho all Scripture is not to us or about us today, yet all of it is profitable to us and that is why God has preserved it for us (2 Tim. 3:16). The fact that God is dealing in grace with His people now and so does not strike them down or punish them at the time they do evil is no indication that He winks at or condones sin. We dare not become careless in this matter.

For our example and warning He has given an account of the disobedience of His people, Israel at Kadesh Barnea.

Read Num. 14 along with Psa. 90 and 91. Note that Psa. 90 is written by Moses and concerns the people who die in the wilderness. But the next Psalm, which is really a part of the 90th, speaks of those who were not numbered and who lived to enter the land.

So for 38 years there were 2 distinct companies in the great crowd of Israel. There were those who were numbered when 20 years of age and upward, and the company which were younger and not numbered and who later entered the promised land via the Jordan.

Now consider the great lesson of obedience that was enjoined for 38 years on this younger generation. God gave angels charge over them to keep them in their ways lest they should even bruise their feet on the stones. But not so with the wicked unbelievers. They could have all kinds of accidents. The younger generation was under the wings and the shadow of the Almighty. They were delivered from snares and traps laid in the wilderness by the enemies. When the pestilence went thru the camp and killed thousands of the older folks, this generation was spared. The terrors of the night did not bother them. Enemy snipers could not hit them with their arrows. The plagues that came in the night did not harm them. The destructive diseases did not waste them in the day time. One of these young folks could stand unharmed while a thousand fell at his side, yes, even while ten thousand fell at his right hand. Every day, it seemed during that 38 years, there was a distinction made between those who were wicked and disobedient and this generation preserved for the inheritance. No evil could befall them. The plague could not enter their habitation. The lion did not bother them. Where thousands of the disobedient tread on the adders at night and died, these could tread on them unharmed. And adders were swarming over a great deal of the wilderness. They did not fear the young lion, and even the dragon (was that Satan?) they could tread under foot.

What a lesson! What a contrast with the powerless idols of Egypt who could not save any from danger and terror!

The disobedient did not enter because of unbelief. Unbelief was the cause of disobedience! Let us take this lesson home to ourselves today. The Christian's greatest need is to know God and His will and purpose in his life. What one may think is right can be in direct opposition to God's program. We dare not trust our own reasoning or opinions in these matters.

## RIGHT DIVISION AND OBEDIENCE

Perhaps some may not be able to see the connection of obedience and right division, but observation over a period of time will convince one that there is a definite relationship.

Today many folks are put in a bad spot by that which they profess to believe and yet cannot practice. This inability to perform which they profess to accept for their standard today has made them very careless in their obedience to any of the Word of God. They have come to the place where they trust tradition, the word of some great leader, or their own judgment rather than what God has said.

For example, we find many who seem to sincerely believe that the sermon on the mount is truth for today. But how many can practice it? Ask such an one for a loan of \$100 or ask him to give you his car or radio (Matt. 5:42) and see how far his practice will go with his teaching! His only excuse is that we just cannot do that today, but he can give no valid reason. But right division will solve the problem.

There was a provision in Moses' law whereby a woman might be divorced and could remarry. But our Lord cancelled that, and Eph. 5 leaves no room for divorce whatsoever. For a loophole men quote the law, but make it cover more than the Word would warrant, and so they would legalize adultery. Adhering to right division would bar the question from even coming up.

All such questions as healing, speaking in tongues, keeping the Passover, water baptism, and the like can easily be settled by the principle of right division. But men choose that which they like. So they try to observe the Passover without circumcision which then makes it illegal. They prefer water baptism to the experience of being identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. They want to speak in tongues so badly that they turn to the chirping and muttering of the spiritist mediums which should carry the death penalty if we were under the law.

The result of all this confusion is that today men are doing that which seemeth right in their own eyes. God's ways are no longer consulted. And because men cannot come up to the dispensational requirements they find in certain portions of the Word, they are careless about any obedience whatsoever. Oh that we might have more Christians with tender consciences toward God, seeking in everything to please Him, seeking His approval, and striving to be good workmen so that they need not be ashamed in that day when works shall be made manifest.

Because of so much carelessness, men are missing the blessing and smile of God. They are not satisfied with their Christian experience. They are not able to instruct others. They then become careless in their appearance and conduct and so bring shame upon the cross of Christ. If the practice cannot adorn the doctrine, then something is wrong with the doctrine.

So we need a revival of searching the Scriptures, rightly dividing them, and then obeying that which is truth for today.

## BEGINNER'S CORNER #21

Continuing our study of the word FOUNDATION, or KATABOLE in the Greek, you will recall that the reference we were interested in was Eph. 1:4, ACCORDING AS HE HATH CHOSEN US IN HIM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

Now some of you may say, "Brother Abbey, you are climbing out on a mighty small limb when you stake your claim to a better hope on the interpretation of one word." And to be frank, I am inclined to agree, with one exception. I am quite certain that the limb on which I lean is fastened to a Body. And that makes a world of difference.

As we go back and study these passages that refer to the use of the word FOUNDATION we are aware that in every instance the word has been used in the correct sense.

In the gospel of John it is stated that God loved the Son before the foundation of the world. That is certainly correct. We are told that all things were made by Christ and without Him was not anything made that was made. So He must have been in the beginning.

In Revelation it states that some names were not written in the book of life since the founding of the earth. And again this must be true. There was no life as we know it before the earth was formed.

In Matt. 25:23 it is RECEIVE THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU SINCE THE FOUNDING. Again this is true; for we know Abraham was promised the land and that the Seed of David would be Ruler over it.

Luke 11:50 mentions the blood of the prophets that had been shed since the foundation of the world. That, no one can deny. Certainly it was not shed before they were put on the earth.

The references in Hebrews concerning Christ and His sufferings are all facts about His earthly ministry and His suffering since the founding of the world.

So as we check these references we find they are ALL used in their context and refer to times and conditions that are acceptable. All (that is) except the one in Ephesians. Now why do we rebel when we turn to this one? Out of 11 references we admit 10 are correctly used, as shown by the context, but one (is, maybe) wrong? Because some may fail to understand it completely we say it is out of context or must have a different meaning.

Paul, chosen by Christ, given the gospel by revelation, the most prolific writer of the NT, wrote this epistle to the Gentiles as one of his last works. I would be more inclined to believe his earlier works to be faulty, if I had a choice. In his early ministry he might have been hasty, ill-informed, or over-zealous; but not in his last writings after a lifetime of service and devotion.

And so our conclusion is obvious, but I leave the acceptance up to you. Is it logical?

Always remember, logic is the orderly array of known facts that results in a valid solution. If we assume such-and-such, it is no longer valid or logical.

...DENTON C. ABBEY

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

TRUTH FOR TODAY Bible Class meets each Tue. nite at 7:30 at the home of your editor. This is the first house west of the junction of Rds. 600W and 100S, about 7 mi. SW of the courthouse. You are welcome to come to class anytime. If you have some questions, call any time, but Sunday afternoon is usually best if you come unannounced.

TRUTH FOR TODAY is published each month by Oscar M. Baker and sent free to anyone anywhere upon request. We appreciate your cooperation in sending names and addresses of those who might be interested.

SOMEBODY has objected to our use of the word SPOOK. We had some difficulty with this when writing articles and this is about the only word we could find that would describe the unscriptural notion many have of the state of the dead. We dared not use any Scriptural term as it might mislead somebody. We hope you understand our problem.

HERMENEUTICS, Courses A and B, were written many years ago by Charles H. Welch to be used as correspondence courses. Mr. Welch can no longer undertake the grading of the papers of those who would like to go thru the courses. Your editor will be willing to do this for you providing you type the material and do an entire course before sending the lessons in. Course A is 30¢ and Course B 20¢.

TAPE RECORDERS. We still have some at \$55 each (originally \$99.95). They use up to 7 in. reels, play at 3 3/4 ips, equipped with mike, and are in blue and white. They will be shipped to you express charges collect.

THE CHURCH AND THE SABBATH, a fine little booklet of about 75 pages, written by Wm. Campbell of Auckland, N. Z. It takes up such subjects as; What is the Church, Who got the Sabbath, Was it ever changed, Who should keep it now, and Why is Sunday kept. We have a supply of these at 45¢ each. There is a lot of information packed into this little booklet.

UNFORTUNATELY in the AV the word SLEEP is used to translate a word which means TO LIE DOWN. Ahab did not sleep with his fathers, but he lay down with his fathers (in death). Check with the Englishman's Heb. and Chald. Concordance and note that SLEEP is not used of the unbeliever when describing death. In fact, it is used sparingly of believers in the OT and the NT as well. This study is suggested in case you may have wondered about it.

FAR ABOVE ALL, a fine little tract, is here on our desk. It explains Eph. 1:21. You should have a few of these for distribution. Send to Philadelphia Bible Testimony, 1403 Alcott St., Philadelphia 49, Pa.

STARTING FROM ZERO is a very good pamphlet by Metcalfe Collier. There are 38 pages of discussion of the steps in the quest to find God. Especially timely for the college student. The first edition was soon exhausted, but now it is in print again. We have copies at 20¢ each.

BEREAN EXPOSITOR. A few subscriptions are still straggling in. Have you taken care of

yours? It is only \$1 per year. If you have any donations for the Berean work, we can send them to England for you. We are glad to assist in this work.

TAPES. We just had a letter from A. P. von Deesten, 357 S. Curson Ave., Los Angeles 36, Calif. and he says that you have just about swamped him with orders for the tapes of Mr. Welch and Mr. Allen. He has several chains going now and can add more if there is a demand. He tells us that Mr. Welch has a new series entitled CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS. Another new tape especially for those in the out-of-the-way places is THE HAND OF FELLOWSHIP. Write to Mr. von Deesten for information about tapes.

NEED HELP? Your editor would like to remind you that he is willing to go a reasonable distance to help with classes that need encouragement, especially where one is beginning. No charge for this. We do not go out to entertain folks and take up collections.

GET IN LINE. Our lending copy of The Apostle of the Reconciliation by C.H. Welch is out making the rounds now. This book is out of print, so this is your chance to read it.

STUDIES IN ACTS. If you have finished this course of lessons and would like for us to grade them, send them in. We have several of the sets left yet. There are 60 lessons based on Mr. Welch's book, From Pentecost to Prison. The book is \$1.50, the set of lessons 50¢.

We are getting almost 100 letters a month now. Keep sending them in. It is about the only way we have of getting acquainted with you and visiting with you.

REMEMBER, we have Berean Publications in stock, as well as Bullinger publications that are currently in print. Also the Companion Bible. Send for lists. Some used books too.

Come to visit us some time. Our telephone is Ulysses 8-2684.

Because of a little printing difficulty last month, we have a few hundred extra copies of Vol. 10, No. 9 TRUTH FOR TODAY. They are perfect except for a slight smudge on edge. Can you use some to distribute among friends?

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