

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #60

STEPS TO A GOAL #10

...THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED.
Eph. 4:1.

Paul, as the prisoner of the Lord, beseeches the saints and the faithful to walk worthy, worthy of the vocation with which they had been called. To us today, this may not seem very important and we just read right over it and never give it a thought. But to the faithful ones at Ephesus and elsewhere, at that time it would have a special significance. Up to the end of Acts, only the *kingdom calling* was recognized by most believers. It is likely that very few realized during that time that there might be some who had a different calling and that their hope would be the *new earth*, but outside the New Jerusalem.

That there should be an *above-heavenly calling*, just had never occurred to believers. And no wonder, for it had been kept a secret in God from ages and generations and never revealed until Acts 28:28 when Israel ceased to be a people, a nation, and therefore no longer had the kingdom calling.

Only a few at that time ever took Paul and his apostleship very seriously. That he should have special revelations from God which were not in accordance with the Jewish Bible (the OT) was simply ridiculous and not to be believed. With most believers, this attitude has not changed to this day.

Up till the end of Acts, all attention had been focussed on the coming Messiah and the setting up of a kingdom which would not only extend over the promised land, but over all the nations of the earth. But at the end of Acts there was an abrupt turn, and most folks missed it. They kept right on going and landed in a wilderness of indecision and doubt, especially with the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Kingdom hopes were thrown to the ground and the question arose with many, *Where do we go from here?*

This calling has to do with nations. That includes the Jew, not with priority, but the same as any other nation. The hope is heaven, not the land promised to Abraham. Blessing now comes thru Christ, not Abraham. The place of the future life is not the earth any more, but in the super-heavens. Abraham, David, and the prophets have been left far behind. They have no part in this calling.

Before, the walk was to be as a *subject* of the King. Now, it is to be as a *member* of the body of which Christ is the Head. Before, the walk was an earthly one. Now, it is a heavenly one. There is a new citizenship.

Since so few have ever been able to understand this calling, it is natural that the early church forgot all about it. It was forgotten truth. Few have brot it to remembrance yet today. Every spiritual blessing in the heavens is not nearly so attractive as the symbols and rituals of an earthly calling to those that live in the flesh and not the spirit.

Now if this is news to you, be a Berean in spirit and continue to search the Scriptures to see if these things be so. It may be that you have been missing something which can be of the greatest importance in your life.

A lack of understanding of the overall plan of the ages has cheated many people of the enjoyment of the blessings they might have had. False ideas concerning the purpose of the creation of Gen. 1:2-31 have blinded many.

This re-creation which was made in 6 days was provisional. It was looking forward to something far better, a new heavens and earth in which should dwell righteousness. Sin had already entered God's creation. But in the midst of that sin and death, God had a plan to work out, some creatures to put on probation so that those who stood the test could be used later on in the two spheres of blessing, the heavens and the earth.

The central subjects of the new creation, as far as the earth is concerned, are the tree of life and the water of life. As for the heavens, we do not know anything about them. Nothing is said. We could not understand even if something was revealed about them.

We make these observations because that there is much confusion and today many are seeking to follow the sermon on the mount as if it were the marching orders for the present time. Yet the sermon on the mount is the Magna Charta of the Millennial Kingdom, a rule that will be here on the earth and has to do with the chosen people Israel and their hope and mission. It has nothing whatsoever to do with people who hope to enjoy future blessing in the heavenly places. The laws and customs in these two countries are different and one cannot apply to the other.

Do not forget, God's plans and purposes are for both the heavens and the earth. In Gen. 1:1 we have the creation of the heavens and the earth. In Rev. we find that there is to be a time when there will be new heavens and new earth. God has several families and different kinds of creatures. Some of these will be on the earth in the future and some will be in the heavens. Do you know your calling?

Now how and when are these changes in the heavens and earth going to be made? We find that the heavenly program will come first. That is the sphere we know the least about. The old principle that the first shall be last and the last first holds good here. The Gentiles who figure in the dispensation of the mystery have the realization of their hope before Israel.

By one creature, Satan, sin entered the universe. By one man sin entered the world. Where Satan and his angels failed, the church of the mystery will find its place. At that time Satan will be cast into the earth.

But shortly Satan and all that follow him will be dispossessed and the kingdom with Israel as the nucleus will take over the earth. But all these things are accomplished in a series of steps which are plainly outlined in the Word. If we would only take time to search and see!

If we would walk in the good works which were before ordained that we should walk in them, we should be careful to learn about God's ways, and find what these good works are and proceed to do them. There is great reward for those who daily search the Scriptures.

THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION, in Rom. 1:16 might read, *The miracle of God unto salvation*. And a miracle it is!

In verse 17 we read the quotation from Hab. 2:4, quoted here and also in Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38. Here in Romans the emphasis is on the word *JUST*. In Galatians it is on *FAITH*. And in Heb. it is on *LIVE*. Try reading each of these with the proper accent.

Wrath was not revealed against man in Gen. 3, but the curse was on the ground for man's sake. We must be careful where we apply the wrath of God.

Wrath is revealed from heaven against those who are supposed to minister the Word, but hold down or suppress the truth in unrighteousness. There are plenty of these folks with us today. Suppressing the truth is just as bad as peddling the lie.

Men knew God at one time (Psa. 19). But there were two things that caused their downfall; 1, they did not glorify Him as God, 2, neither were they thankful.

Now note that God does not change in His attitude to man until man himself has changed. Men professed to be wise, but became fools. God has little use for fools, so HE GAVE UP ... GAVE UP ... GAVE OVER (1:24, 26, 28).

Be careful, do not get lost in the maze in chapter 2. It is about Jewish and Gentile believers of the time. *MAN* in verse 1 is explained in verse 17. The Jew was prone at that time to look down upon and criticize the Gentile in the church. The Jew is reminded that the Gentile believer is outside the law and does not at any time become subject to it. But at the same time, under grace, the Gentile does the right thing and has a law in his heart, doing just as well, if not better, than the Jew morally.

So the Jew is not to judge the Gentile believers lest they condemn themselves. All believers, both Jew and Gentile, have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God. Be careful, this is not speaking of the unbeliever. He cannot come short of the glory of God. *He never even started!* Note also in verse 7 how that any believer may obtain reward in the hereafter. Note also that believers who do not obey the truth (not the law) there comes upon them indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish, but on the Jew first. Obedience brings blessing, on the Jew first, and also on the Gentile. Note the dispensational priority. Romans was written during the latter part of Acts period.

In chapter 3, note the advantages that the Jew has dispensationally. Also refer to 9:3-5.

Paul quotes from Psalms 14 and 53 to show that even in Israel none was righteous, and none sought after God. If that was the condition of Israel, how much can they blame the Gentile? Would you ever believe that such things as you find in verses 10-18 could be spoken of believers? But when we search our own hearts, we sadly must admit that it is a picture of our old nature which is still with us.

The conclusion then is that man is made righteous by faith, not by deeds of the law. .boasting is excluded, ruled out.

There are some who may not take very seriously the Lord's claim, I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. But here is a claim that is absolute. In fact it is *three absolutes*.

The Lord was not a way-shower. He did not indicate the way. But if any man is ever to find his way to God, there must be a way. There must be a true way. Our Lord makes it plain that there is only one way. It is not a case of all roads leading to Rome. It has been said that all the denominations are ways to God. But if there is only one way, then there can be only one denomination that would be the way. But the truth is that no church is the way to God. None has a monopoly on that. But our Lord could say, I AM THE WAY.

Men try to invent other ways. They do not like the prescribed way. But the more they try to invent and get around the truth, the farther away they get from God. Professing themselves wise, they only become fools.

Our Lord was not in the business of teaching truth. He was not pointing out truth to men, except when He bade them look upon Him and said, I AM THE TRUTH. For ages the philosophers had been searching for truth. But they never dreamed that truth could be embodied in a person. But outside of Christ there is no truth. On all hands we find Satan's lie, even in the churches and religious schools. Man cannot step over or around Christ in the search for truth. He cannot be by-passed. He is the truth.

We have heard men stand in the pulpit and aver that they were preaching the truth, but all they had to say was a repetition of gossip they had read or heard; social, political, and otherwise. If they did not preach Christ, they were not preaching truth.

For ages men have been trying to find the tree of life. They worshipped the evergreens (living trees) and still do once a year. One man roamed this continent years ago seeking the fountain of youth (or life). Men claim to possess life (immortality) by birth. They think they inherit it from Adam. They never made a greater mistake! They inherit *death* from Adam, not *immortality*.

There is life only in Christ. He is the life. Immortality is a gift, and is only for the believer. All others die. Only those who are of the new creation of which Christ is the Head will ever be made alive. Look at 1 Cor. 15:22. Also compare John 6:39, 44, 54.

Everything but these absolutes will pass away. Christ remaineth. The ark was a type of Christ. All perished except those that were in the ark. All perish except those that are in Christ. The cornerstone and capstone of all being is Christ. Those that deny Him and His essential deity have pulled out the whole foundation. For all such there is left no way, no truth, and certainly no life.

We have three questions to face in this connection. What will the answers be? Our whole destiny depends on the answers.

Are we walking that way?

Are we believing that truth?

Are we possessing that life?

WHEN HE FIRST LOVED US

We can never fully express the love of God. It is past finding out, as far as the fleshly nature of man is concerned. It is the same with the love of Christ (Eph. 3:19).

In looking at John 17:24 we find the Son reminding the Father that He had loved Him before the *foundation of the world*. The questions that arise are, When was this? and why?

This word *foundation*, *KATABOLE*, occurs three times in the Bible (John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; and 1 Pet. 1:20). It is made up of 2 words, *KATA* and *BOLE*. *BOLE* is a noun and occurs once in the Scriptures (Luke 22:41). There it is translated *cast*. Our Lord went about a *stone's cast* from the disciples to pray. *KATA* is variously translated as down, out, away, etc. One can readily see that there is nothing in the word *foundation* that would fit the idea given by the Greek. But at the same time one must note that this casting is not a striking. There was nothing done to the stone; it was flung away.

Some time the earth must have been cast or flung from its place, either in this solar system or some other, and did not always have the same orbit and place that it now does. This could account, in part at least, for the overthrow of Gen. 1:2. This may be more understandable to those who have studied the known history of Venus.

We have before connected this overthrow of the world with the downfall of Lucifer. Here is where sin and death entered the universe.

Now we also have noted before that there was a promise of life in Christ before the ages began (Eph. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:1; and Titus 1:2).

This life was to be made possible by a great sacrifice which was determined before age times, before the flinging away of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). Here the Lamb was foreordained. Now contrary to popular notions, God's wrath did not fall on the sacrifice, not ever. The sacrifice was accepted, it was a sweet-smelling savor. God did not pour out His wrath on His Son at Calvary, but accepted Him and all that believe in Him. That is why we are accepted in Him.

Now because the Son was to be the sacrifice and would be obedient, the Father loved Him from the very time that this was planned, which was before age times, before the flinging away of the world. This love is in contrast to the hate a holy God must have for sin and death. God's rule had been questioned; His glory dimmed; and His creation ruined by the revolt.

Since this ruin and its effects were not confined to this little earth, but affected the heavens as well, this promise of life and this Lamb that was to be slain would have more than the earth for their sphere of influence. So that the heavens might be restored, a people was chosen from before this flinging away and disruption which followed (Eph. 1:4). This is where we come in, if we will. That a kingdom should be established on the earth was a plan that was made later, after the failure of Adam and his race. So the things that pertain to the kingdom are since the foundation, or rather disruption of the world. This is very brief, but a beginning which you should go on and finish.

BEGINNER'S CORNER #26

BECAUSE THOU KNEWEST NOT THE TIME OF THY VISITATION.

These words, spoken by Christ shortly before His crucifixion, are filled with meaning. He is saying quite frankly that it was the day of their deliverance. Their day of visitation was nigh and they comprehended it not. This again recalls to memory the reference to Isa. 61 in Luke 4 where Christ preached the acceptable year of the Lord and said, THIS DAY IS THIS SCRIPTURE FULFILLED IN YOUR EARS.

Here was a period of time when some historic incident in God's dealing with His people should have come to pass. It had been prophesied, the record had been written that all might know. The day was proclaimed by John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles. Yet the people knew it not nor desired to know the day of their visitation.

But now Christ is risen, the apostles prophesy no more; the Jews to whom the oracles of God were committed are set aside. *Where do we go from here?* Certainly if those things we read in the Bible were manifestations and signs of the day of which Christ spoke, then this is no longer the time of that visitation. For in Mt. 23:38,39 Christ said, BEHOLD YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE, FOR I SAY UNTO YOU, YE SHALL NOT SEE ME HENCEFORTH, TILL YE SHALL SAY, BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

The conclusion is inescapable. We too must have a day of visitation. FOR ALL SHALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (Rom. 14:10). But certainly we are not bound by those circumstances that applied to the Circumcision 2,000 years ago! But most remarkable is the fact that just at the time when this was all taking place a new apostle was arising to proclaim a new hope and the *acceptable year of the Lord for the Gentiles*. FOR THIS CAUSE I PAUL, THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU GENTILES (Eph. 3:1). WHEREFORE I WAS MADE A MINISTER...AND BY REVELATION CHRIST MADE KNOWN...THE MYSTERY.

Nowhere in the Bible do we have the other apostles asserting that they were ordained to go to the Gentiles, neither do they speak of a Mystery or a new dispensation, but rather, as Peter said at Pentecost, THIS IS THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY JOEL THE PROPHET...THEREFORE LET ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL KNOW (Acts 2). But of Paul it is said, PERSUADING THEM CONCERNING JESUS, BOTH OUT OF THE LAW OF MOSES AND OUT OF THE PROPHETS (Acts 28).

But with the advent of Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles, we see a change in the *good news*. No longer is it a question of what saith the Scriptures written by Moses and the prophets; neither that which was offered the Jew in the acceptable year of the Lord. But now it is the hope of the mystery of the one body, both to the Jew and to the Gentile, to anyone who will accept it by faith in Christ Jesus. Neither is it to the Jew first.

This new arrangement with the Jew and Gentile on an equality in every way is what Paul refers to as the *Fellowship of the Mystery*.

Next time, the Lord willing, we shall take up the study of *The One Body*. ..DENTON C. ABBEY

THE UNKNOWN GOD

When the apostle Paul came to Athens, the center of art and culture of that day, he saw there that which must have saddened him very much. There were gods on every hand. At every corner, grove, or public place were gods and more gods. Somebody said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man.

Here was Paul, brought up a strict Pharisee, a believer in the one God, and he finds himself in the midst of all this idolatry. How he must have shrunk from such a revolting situation! But he made the best of it. Here was a chance to proclaim the *One True God*.

In looking about, Paul discovered an altar which was built to *The Unknown God*. They were afraid that some god had been missed or overlooked, and they did not want to offend any of the gods, so an altar was set up and dedicated to the unknown god (if there was one).

So they did not know what they were worshipping. It is something like what the Lord said to the Samaritan woman, YE WORSHIP YE KNOW NOT WHAT. Yet this woman claimed Abraham for father and professed to worship *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. But she did not know Him!

Are we any better today? Has the knowledge of God so faded out that men do not think that such questions as the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and other topics are important? If the great fundamental truths of Christianity are brot into question, it is because men do not know God. Moreover, if they love and know God, they will love and respect the Word of God.

How many *really know* the God whom they worship? The Pharisee praying in the temple did not know God and so he thot a great deal of self. He was sure that he was better than others, especially the hated Publican. He was really worshipping himself rather than God. Is that what many are doing today? Do they go where there is all that which pleases the carnal senses? Are they more interested in the fine church, the music, the lights, and all these externals, than in really knowing God?

God cannot be known outside the written and incarnate Word. From nature and the skies we can find all the evidences that there is a God. But they do not reveal His nature, His love of mankind, or His plan of redemption. At one time the constellations did reveal the plan of redemption, but man has so corrupted that knowledge that now it is practically lost.

The comprehension of the dispensation of the mystery lies at the foundation of a complete knowledge of God. The mystery or secret of Christ cannot be known apart from the dispensation of the mystery or secret. These are all bound up together.

The worship of Christendom today is mainly of the *Unknown God*. They worship they know not what. We are not attempting to place the blame. We merely state an obvious fact. We suggest no remedy. We are not reformers. But for ourselves, those of us who know God, let us seek diligently to shew ourselves approved unto Him. Let us be good workmen and go on to perfection. If we know Him, let us glorify Him.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

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