

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #69

STEPS TO A GOAL #19

FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS, FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. 4:12.

We may outline this portion thus;

I. For the perfecting of the saints;

1. To work of ministry,
2. To building of the body of Christ.

The word PERFECTING supposes a rupture or displacement. This is not a perfecting of the immature state of the saints of the Acts period. This is not an evolution. It is the work subsequent to the creation of one new man from the two, Jew and Gentile. By having trusted, they have been taken from the one dispensation and placed in the new. They must be adjusted now to their new position. This is orientation.

Now these apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers must first of all know what is the dispensation they are working with before they can do any building up or perfecting. Those who mix up the dispensations are not building, but tearing down. They cannot do a good work. One of the requirements of a good workman is to rightly divide the Word. Anything else will only make him ashamed in that day.

There is much ado about work these days, but it is of no value unless it is on dispensational ground. Trying to build up a kingdom which was set aside 1900 years ago is foolishness and a sheer waste of time and effort. But the great Deceiver would have it that way!

The work of the workman today is to build up. But many have left the work and are engaged in tearing down the structures of others. They feel obliged to spend all the time in exposing error and fighting the brethren. Magazines and papers are dedicated to this kind of beating of the air. Column after column of space is taken up with this foolishness instead of speaking truth and building up the body of Christ.

When men compare themselves with others and pick out all the faults they can, their motives show. They wish to be praised of men. They have their reward. But they never can be approved of God. Such works will be burned up.

Now these saints had been plucked up and set in a new dispensation. They needed encouragement, not criticism. They needed prayer, not cursing. They needed sympathy, not knocking. They needed light of the gospel, not darkness of men's opinions. They needed a helping hand, not buffeting. The men who were gifts from the ascended Lord could and should help them.

Today we have a parallel situation. When one believes the truth of God and becomes a member of the church of the dispensation of the mystery, he needs all the help he can get. Leaders of the trade schools (preparing men for professional ministry) will rise up like the silver-smiths and make a great howl. They can hate as did the Pharisees, and if they dared, would treat the teachers of right division even as Christ was treated.

So today there is a place for the perfecting of the saints, unto a work of ministry, unto a building up of the body of Christ. Let others oppose if they will.

Since we have mentioned the Amorite and his part in the prolonging of the stay of Israel in Egyptian bondage, we might do well to find what we can concerning his origin.

Now before the flood Satan had no way to know from what line the seed of woman should come, except that it was Seth, not Cain. So we read in Ge 6 of Satan's attempt to forestall the plan and purpose of God in respect to the promised seed. It was a wily and crafty plot.

In this account we see that angels who kept not their first estate mingled with the daughters of men and their offspring were a race of giants and men of renown. Here is the true background of the mythological heroes that are so well known. Note that nearly every one of them has a god for father and an earth woman for mother.

It was not long till the whole human race was contaminated with this false seed with the exception of Noah and his sons. The flood was designed to exterminate this false seed.

But in Ge 6:4 the words, AND AFTER THAT, tell us that there was another intrusion of the false seed after the flood. This time Satan had some idea of what family the seed of woman was coming from (Ge 9:24-27). Shem had the pre-eminence. Canaan was cursed and was to be a servant. So Satan tried to put enmity between Shem and Canaan. The false seed, the Amorite descended from Canaan.

To Abraham it was told that Israel would be held in bondage till the iniquity of the Amorite was full (Ge 15:13-16). So we have an outline of the efforts so far to prevent the birth of the seed of woman.

Now all this is but a small picture of the history of God's dealing with mankind. God is dealing with the whole race according to the pattern of His purpose for Israel. An enemy is seen in the background. There is a wicked host whose iniquity must wax ripe before there is a resurrection and man is released from the bondage of sin and death. There is a reason.

Today the purpose is being held up till the iniquity of certain powers in the heavens is full. The mystery, God's prior purpose for the race (Eph 1:4), will not be complete till the enemies are expelled from the heavens down into the earth (Re 12:9). After this event comes the final roundup of the earth purpose centered in Israel and the Millennial kingdom which will put all enemies under His feet. So we have the pattern and the reason for the long delay.

Some day the church will rule over the place now occupied by Satan and his angels. But the resurrection of the church has to be delayed till that sphere is cleansed and these powers dispossessed. The day of the Lord, the time covered by the Revelation, does not begin till this iniquity has waxed ripe. The Lord comes to the earth after the mystery of iniquity has been manifested.

Unless we first get an overall view of the plan and purpose of the ages, we will stumble in every effort to interpret any of its stages. Surely all Scripture is profitable, making us wise unto His plan of salvation (2Ti 3:15, 16).

OUTLINE STUDIES IN ROMANS #11

ARE YOU FREE TO ANSWER?

In chapter 12 we go from doctrine to practice. Chapters 1-8 are taken up with the gospel of God's Son. Chapters 9-11 are concerned with the gospel to Israel.

1. Beseech, not command. Bought with a price, so only reasonable that we present our bodies as a sacrifice (Heb 13:15,16).

2. Be not fashioned (masquerade). The world, or this wicked age. Transformed, or transfigured as at the transfiguration. WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME DO? Do we ask that? Is His will acceptable?

3. Paul almost monopolizes the word *grace*. He uses it some 90 times. There is no place for *swank* in the Christian life. Pride was the fall of Lucifer and the parent of sins (Pr 16:5; 21:4; 1Pe 5:5; Eph 4:1,2). God cannot use a proud Christian. Sober; salvation-minded, sane, well-balanced.

4. In health, not conscious of the body. All members work together.

5. Salvation puts all in Christ.

6. Talents were given in proportion of 5,3,1. Each was expected to produce 100%. Small talent folks more neglectful than those with many. Always saying, *I can't*.

7. Ministry means service. All are in this ministry. Not set aside for a few.

8. Each phase of ministry should be governed by Christian graces.

9. Verse 6 mentions *faith*. Note the 7 subdivisions. Here in 9 is *love* and can be outlined the same. *Hope* is in verse 12 and it too has 7 parts. Compare with 1Co 13.

10. In our affections, God should be first, others second, and self last. This is the order in conjugating a Hebrew verb, persons are 3,2,1. In our language we reverse the order.

11. The lazy servant was called *slothful* and *wicked*. Let us be up and doing!

12. Our *Hope* is a Person. We should rejoice in Him. Persistent in tribulation. Constant in prayer. Live godly and suffer persecution. Pray always, never stop.

13. A stingy Christian would be a paradox. God loves a hilarious giver. Hospitality refers especially to having the church in the home.

14,15. Important bits of the sermon on the mount repeated.

16. No partiality; no cliques. Be not wise in yourselves (wisdom is a gift from God).

17. Provide things beautiful. Two wrongs can never make a *right*.

18. Live at peace with all men just as far as it is possible. What then? We may have to avoid troublesome persons.

19. We dare not avenge ourselves because in the flesh we cannot judge righteously. So we must leave all that to Him. *Can ye be angry and sin not?* (Eph 4:26,31).

20. We must so act that there can never be any grounds for blame or criticism of what we do. Lean over backwards in this respect.

21. Yielding to the flesh in any way may result in being overcome of evil. This is Satan's only way of approach. We must be positive in every thought and deed, not negative.

FOR THIS CAUSE MANY ARE WEAK AND SICKLY AMONG YOU, AND MANY SLEEP. 1Co 11:30.

When people get involved with religion and its various creeds and traditions, they no longer are free to confess to truth. Such was the condition of the chief priests and elders at the time of our Lord. When He asked, THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, WHENCE WAS IT? FROM HEAVEN OR OF MEN? they dared not answer. They were not free men. That is why they could not open their mouths and were dumb in the presence of truth.

WHILE THE PHARISEES WERE GATHERED TOGETHER, JESUS ASKED THEM, SAYING, WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST? WHOSE SON IS HE? THEY SAY UNTO HIM, THE SON OF DAVID. HE SAITH UNTO THEM, HOW THEN DOTH DAVID IN SPIRIT CALL HIM LORD? ...AND NO MAN WAS ABLE TO ANSWER HIM A WORD. These wicked hypocrites could not call Him *Lord*. They preferred their religious system to the truth, and would rather die than confess Him.

But take a look at the quotation above. I would like to ask you a question about it. Were these who were judged Jews and Gentiles, or were they Jews only? Are you free to answer? Take your time to it. This may involve you deeper than you may think. So take care!

Suppose you answer, Both. You will have every exponent of the Grace Gospel chewing your ears. For Paul claimed that he had a gospel of grace for the Gentiles. Therefore they could not be judged by the law. If Paul's claims were valid, then it would be impossible for Gentiles to be included among those so judged. Their inclusion would be against the edict of the council at Jerusalem (Ac 15) which did not require the Gentiles to observe the law, which would include the observance of the Jewish Passover. And if the law were still in effect at all, then the Gentile could not observe it (Ex 12:43,45,48). If the Gentiles were under grace, as Paul was insisting, then they were not under the law and could not be judged as were Ananias and Sapphira.

Suppose you answer, Jews. Then you will have every ritualist on your neck. For if they will have the Judaistic rituals in the churches today, then they must claim the Gentiles were not under grace, but under law. If this Passover was for Jews only, then there would have to be a different gospel for the Gentiles (to which the Jerusalem council agreed). Also if you answer that it was Jews, you will have to go further and explain how it is that many compel the Gentiles to partake of this feast today. The frontier at Ac 28:28 will have to be reckoned with. You certainly are going to be a persona non grata with the religious folks. Like the man born blind, you will be thrown out of the synagogue. Then what?

Now, unless you insist, I am not going to press the question. In this country and in this day you can invoke the 5th amendment if you get in a tight corner. The chief priests, elders, and Pharisees could not do that, so they kept silence. They did not reply.

If you have answered, Both, then you have cut all 14 of Paul's epistles and the gospel of John from your Bible. Do you know why?

THE BRIM OF THE UNIVERSE

BEGINNER'S CORNER #35

IF THEN YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST, SEEK THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST IS, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. Col 3:1.

On the brim of the universe, sitting at the right of the Father, is the Son of God. At present He is engaged in the *plan of the secret* (Eph 3:9), the building of a church which is His body. When this now-revealed secret purpose is accomplished and this body is manifested with Him in the heavenlies, then will the Son of God turn to claim His earthly kingdom. Then will the beautiful hymn of Reginald Heber be fulfilled: *The Son of God goes forth to war, A kingly crown to gain; His blood-red banner streams afar: Who follows in His train?*

But to those who note that from the prison epistles of Paul (Eph and Col) we learn of the new purpose for today, a group to be joined to Him in heaven, the word ABOVE takes on added importance. And why not? That is where we shall be. That is our home.

The little Greek word translated ABOVE in Col 3:1 is *ano*. It occurs nine times in the NT. Note the following usages which shed light on what it means to have a hope far above all.

Joh 2:7, JESUS SAID TO THEM, 'FILL THE JARS WITH WATER. AND THEY FILLED THEM UP TO THE BRIM (*ano*). At first I started to pass this verse by as giving no further insight into the meaning of the word as it concerns our hope. Then I paused and reflected, *Why, that's it! The place 'above, where Christ is,' is the brim, yes, the brim of the universe.* But this *BRIM* is above the creation. It is God's very presence, for we read that Christ is seated in the heavenly places FAR ABOVE (*huperano*) ALL (Eph 1:20,21) and that He ascended up FAR ABOVE (*huperano*) ALL THE HEAVENS (Eph 4:10).

Joh 8:23, HE SAID TO THEM, YOU ARE FROM BELOW. I AM FROM ABOVE (*ano*). It is the place where Christ came from. Literally He said, I AM OF THE THINGS ABOVE. And so are we as belonging to Him.

Joh 11:41, at the open grave of Lazarus, AND JESUS LIFTED UP (*ano*) HIS EYES. Those eyes, to men, may have only looked upward. But they looked above all, right into the throne room of glory.

Ph'p 3:14, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD (*ano*) CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. The King James Version had THE HIGH CALLING. Ivan Panim has translated it, THE UPWARD CALLING. Certainly it is a calling glorious to anticipate.

We are told to seek those things which are above. We are told to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Why? Because our Hope, Christ, is there, seated on the right hand of God.

Many years ago, in The Expositor's Greek Testament, A. S. Peake wrote, *Our home with Him is not simply in the region of things above, but in the highest position there, at God's right hand.* He also wrote, *Those who have risen with Christ must realize ascension with Him.*

If raised... then seek!

--SIDNEY A. HATCH

To establish our frontier of where truth begins for today, we turn again to that oft-repeated passage re right division (2Ti 2:15).

If we make no distinction, and care less, as to what God has revealed to us thru His Word, then why bother to admit that we are Christians? Better that we do like one religious group did recently in Washington, D.C., make a public announcement to the effect that we do not believe the contents of the Bible and be done with it!

I am no longer amazed that people are blind to many truths of today, but the incredible thing is that most of them prefer it that way. As Elroy Robinson stated at class one nite, *People will believe any scrap of man-made evidence as to evolution, deity, etc., but willfully scoff at endless amounts of God's evidence which might be contrary to their thinking.*

What judge today would open a Roman law book to judge an American lawsuit? What mechanic would open one of Audel's 1910 Mechanic's Handbooks to repair your '59 automatic transmission? What doctor would open his encyclopedia of witch craft and magic to treat a modern case of polio? What Christian teacher would open the OT of 1,000 B.C. to teach truth for today? Unless we heed the progress of time and the revelation of the written Word, we are lost.

Nowhere in Scripture does Peter say he was the apostle to the uncircumcision. Nowhere does Christ assert He was sent unto the Gentiles. Nowhere does Scripture record that the early Christian movement (circa 30-60 A.D.) was predated on anything the Gentiles might or might not do. The Word boldly states that it is, TO THE JEW FIRST.

If there was no dispensation in view, why did Paul in his letter to the Corinthians advise the virgins not to marry? A few years later in his letter to Timothy he warns Timothy that a deacon in the church must be a good man, the husband of one wife, keeping his children under subjection.

Why in Romans did he say the Jew was blinded in part until the fulness of the Gentile be come in, if no change was in view?

If no dispensation was in view, why in Acts 28:28 did he remark that salvation was sent unto the Gentiles and they would hear it?

If we are going to accept this change in dispensations, as the Word clearly indicates, and the apostleship connected with it, then we in turn must heed the doctrines and dictates of this change.

These can only be found in Paul's prison epistles. Some of these changes I listed in Article 18. He tells us that as a people in this age we are not to observe things that are only a shadow of things to come, but rather hold to the Head which is Christ (Col 2:16-20); that our calling is a heavenly hope in contrast to the earthly hope of Israel; that this hope has been hid in God from the beginning of the world (Eph 3:9); that this mystery, as Paul calls it, was revealed to him in due time to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (Eph 3:9).

--DENTON C. ABBEY

THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELEVEN YEARS are completed with this issue of TFT. When we started with a single mimeographed sheet back in 1948, little did we think that it would grow as it has. It was a good thing we did not know, for we would have been scared to start. Your editor was teaching school then, and figured that he could finance this small undertaking himself. But now, without the help of friends and book sales, it would be impossible to carry on. Some of you have been with us from the start, others have dropped in along the way. We thank all of you for your interest and prayers in our behalf.

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