

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #70

STEPS TO A GOAL #20

TILL WE ALL COME TO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD. 4:13

The Companion Bible suggests that EVEN be used instead of AND. This makes an apposition or explanation. The unity of the faith then is the knowledge of God.

What a definition! How simple and at the same time so all-inclusive. Men's creeds and definitions are so wordy and obscure, but here all is in simple language and easy to understand.

There can never be any man-made unity of the faith. All attempts to come to understandings in the flesh are vain. Everything must be focused on the Son of God. In Him is the unity of the faith. If we are ever to realize that unity, it must be in the knowledge of Him.

It is not hard to see in Christians around us these days that this really works. Those who seem to know Christ and show Him forth in their lives are not those who are criticizing and *finding fault* with others all the time. They are not considered *hard to get along with*. But they are mellow and understanding, showing love to the brethren. So this verse shows forth a practical truth we do well to observe.

This knowledge is epignosis. This is a personal or thoro knowledge. It is a knowledge that changes a person. This knowledge cannot be a false knowledge. This unity of the faith embraces all that can be known concerning the Son of God. We must take the complete record. Those who will in any way deny anything that is revealed of the Son of God cannot come into the fulness of the unity of the faith. We do well to learn all we can about Him.

This knowledge is in contrast to a mere historical knowledge or an awareness of the existence of something. The scribes knew where the Lord was to be born. But that was just a superficial knowledge. They had not learned Him from the Scriptures. But with Anna and Simeon it was different. They were so saturated with the Word which testified of Him that they knew Him and recognized Him as the *Salvation of Israel*.

It is a historical fact that Christ lived on the earth and died. It is something most anyone can know about. But His brothers lived with Him and did not recognize Him as the promised Messiah till after His death. His own boyhood neighbors tried to kill Him once when He led the meeting in the local Synagogue. They did not know Him with that personal knowledge that changes one.

The multitudes would have made Him king, but they soon forsook Him. They did not know Him. It was Paul's highest ambition to know Him. It is the Christian's greatest need today. It is a worthy ambition for all of us.

If only Christendom today knew Him! There would be a unity of the faith instead of all the divisions and strifes and hatreds and everything which divides believers. If they knew Christ, then He would be manifested in their lives and the world would be convinced of the truth of the gospel.

He cannot be known by the flesh, but only by the spirit or new nature in the believer.

Last time we spoke of the Amorite in the land as well as the false seed before the flood. These will help us to better understand many passages in the NT, especially in relation to the coming kingdom on the earth.

In Mt 13:24-30 we have a parable which has in it an example of the false seed. A man sowed good seed in his field. While men slept his enemy came and sowed tares in the field among the good seed. When the seed came up the tares were in evidence. The servants want to know where the tares came from. The man says that an enemy had done it. They want to uproot the tares, but he says wait till the harvest, as it might ruin the good plants while tearing out the bad. At the time of the harvest the reapers will first gather the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them. Then the wheat will be gathered into the barn.

Our Lord explained this parable to them. He said that the sower was the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the evil one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels.

Our Lord further explained that so it would be at the end of the age. He would send forth angels who were to gather all that offend and do iniquity and burn them up. He adds that THEN shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father.

So it is evident that the Lord could not set up His kingdom at the time He gave this parable. The tares were there then. The Pharisees were of their father, the devil.

But why could He not send His angels then and take out the tares? The harvest was not ripe. Israel was not ready to repent nor had the mystery of iniquity ripened and been manifested. This then was not the day of vengeance, and our Lord was right in stopping in the midst of a sentence in Lu 4:19. If He had read on He would have said, AND THE DAY OF VENGEANCE OF OUR GOD. But our Lord believed in and practiced *Right Division* (2Ti 2:15) and so stopped right in the middle of a verse.

It is plain then that the harvest is to be at the end of the age. The righteous will not shine forth in the kingdom till the tares have been disposed of. So we can see that this fits in with the counterfeit pre-millennial kingdom of the beast, Babylon revived. At the end of the age, at the end of the 70th week of Daniel, when the feet of the image of Da 2 are in view and the little stone smites the image on the feet and destroys it, this is the harvest time. When the Lord comes and sets up His rule on the earth, then will the children of the kingdom shine forth.

He that hath an ear, let him hear. It takes the opened ear to understand these things. It did then, it does now, and it will later.

Today we know that there is evil and iniquity in the heavenlies that must also wax ripe before this harvest, that the two run together. But we are anticipating.

OUTLINE STUDIES IN ROMANS #12

THE STANDING AND STATE OF JOB

This time we take up the section from chapter 13 to 15:7. It concerns practice.

What should be the attitude of the believer toward government? That is a question that has come to many a believer in the last 19 centuries. It is *right* for a person to be in subjection to the government. No government exists unless God allows it. We do not know His reasons. There are exceptions (Ac 4:19,20; 5:29).

Debt is necessary in business, but should be used sparingly, and not to satisfy the flesh.

Again there is the matter of law. If love were perfect, then there would be no need for law. But human nature being what it is, we must have laws. See 2Ti 3:2-4. Read 1Co 13 often.

The hope of the church at Rome was near. They expected the return of the Lord and that soon. That return was contingent upon the repentance of Israel (Ac 2:19).

In the meantime they were to put on Christ and reckon the old nature dead, making no provision for it.

Chapter 14 begins with the receiving of the brethren. Closed communion and all that sort of thing are ruled out. It is well to note the various ways in which the Jew was separate from other nations in order to understand what is involved here. Read Ac 10:14; 11:3.

There is quite a contrast between Man's judging and the Lord's judging.

The Jew regarded days; the Gentile did not. These days were soon to pass away. Keeping of days was no basis for judgment.

All are to be judged with a righteous judgment (2Co 5:9,10). But for those who are in Christ there is no condemnation (8:1).

No one can judge another. His judgment can not be righteous. But we do well to judge ourselves (1Co 8:12; 6:12).

The kingdom of God, whether literal or spiritual, does not deal with things external, but with the inner man, the new nature.

The goal is to serve Christ.

If there is any doubt about anything being sin or not the right thing to do, to do it is sin. All must be done in faith that it is right.

Chapter 15 begins with a lesson in helpfulness to those weak and in need. All about us are those who are discouraged and afraid to go on. A lift here and there can mean a lot to these folks. It is our duty and privilege to lend a hand whenever there is opportunity.

It is the duty of the believer to edify, to build up. That is pleasing his neighbor.

Christ did not please Himself (Ps 69:9).

The Scriptures were written for our learning. They testify of Christ. We can know Him only from the Word. Our hope is in the Scriptures, for they testify of Him. Comfort means to *strengthen together*.

Like minded...one mind. Christian unity has been made, we are to keep it.

In verse 7 we have *receive* again as in 14:1. The goal is the glory of God. If God has received a believer, dare we exclude him? Our Lord received publicans and sinners. Are we as servants better than our Master? ..TAPE 5A12

There are 2 puzzles in the story of Job. One is why that a man who was PERFECT AND UPRIGHT should be so severely reprimanded by Jehovah. The other is why that such trials should come upon a man who was PERFECT AND UPRIGHT.

If it were not for a peek behind the scenes and a revelation of the workings of the accuser, we would not have the answer to the latter. This revelation is a great comfort to those who have similar trials today. We cannot see these things on the surface, but there is an enemy working behind the scenes. On the other hand we have an *Advocate* to answer to all the accusations that can be made.

Job's helpmeet was a poor comforter in his time of affliction. All she could think of was that he should curse his Creator and then commit suicide!

His 3 so-called friends were no better. All they could offer was the comfort of religion. They knew of God, but did not know Him. All that Eliphaz knew was what he had seen. He had nothing to offer beyond *Human Experience*. And that fell far short of Job's need. Next came Bildad. But he, too, failed to meet the need of the hour. All he knew was *Human Tradition*. What the fathers said was his refrain, as it is with so many today. He was a poor comforter. Zophar was no better. All he could think of was, man gets what is coming to him, no more or less. All this was based on *Human Merit*. He knew nothing of mercy and grace.

Religion could not answer Job's question of why these things had happened. It could not comfort him.

One question that came up on Job's part was how that a man could be just with God. It had not been revealed to him that man could be justified by faith based upon knowledge. Yet in almost the same breath he was showing forth that very faith, for he declared that he would continue to trust God even tho He should slay him. But what he really wanted was a daysman, one to act as a mediator to plead with God for him. But even as he was asking for that, he declared, I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH. How near one can be to truth and yet be so far away if it is not revealed to him! But Elihu stepped in and rebuked Job and his three friends. Job's main fault was that he had tried to maintain his integrity and in doing so had charged God with taking away his judgment. This was a serious offense.

Finally God speaks with Job and asks him a long list of questions. Job is led to see that he is not so perfect when he sees the righteousness of God. Job breaks down and says, I AM VILE... I HAVE HEARD OF THEE BY THE HEARING OF THE EAR: BUT NOW MINE EYE SEETH THEE. WHEREFORE I ABHOR MYSELF. Herein he spoke that which was right and God gave him reward.

All thru his trials Job was perfect in his standing before God. That could not be changed. But his state needed some improvement before he was ready for rewards. How true that is of many of us today!

THE WELL-DRESSED BEREAN

BEGINNER'S CORNER #36

AND ABOVE ALL THESE PUT ON LOVE, WHICH BINDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER IN PERFECT HARMONY. Col 3:14.

The above is, more literally, *And upon all (these things) put on love, which is a joint-bond of maturity.*

Paul has just given the glorious exhortation and promise of Col 3:1-4. He then turns and urges the believers to MAKE DEAD certain things in their lives, IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, PASSION, EVIL DESIRE, AND COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY. Then he urges them to put on certain things, COMPASSION, KINDNESS, LOWLINESS, MEEKNESS, AND PATIENCE, FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER AND...FORGIVING EACH OTHER.

This is followed by our text, verse 14. The word for ABOVE is *epi* which means UPON or OVER. So I like to think that here Paul is saying, having put on all these other garments which give evidence of our life and position in Christ, let us finally put on over them all, as an overcoat, love.

We are not trying to be amusing; no, we are deadly serious, when we say that this is what the well-dressed Berean wears! This is the overcoat of maturity. LOVE here is agape. This is the strongest word for love in the NT. It is used exclusively to express that spiritual bond of love between God and man, and between man and man in Christ. It is thus distinct from other words for FRIENDSHIP, NATURAL AFFECTION, etc. It is the word used in 1Jo 4:8, GOD IS LOVE.

We also note in this verse the word for BOND. It is *sundesmos*, *that which binds together*. The final word, HARMONY in the RSV and PERFECTNESS in the AV, is *teleiotes*. It means COMPLETENESS or MATURITY. It is on this word that the emphasis lies. Love is the bond which is completeness or maturity. Where there is love there is maturity, completeness.

We rejoice that many Christians are recognizing that Acts 28:28 is the great turning point of Scripture. Here Israel's hope of Messiah's return is interrupted and postponed. Then the truth of the church which is His body is revealed to Paul (Eph 3; Col 1:24-29).

Recognizing this, we fellowship together. We find that the Bible makes sense; that it is not contradictory. We see that we are complete in Christ our Lord and not bound to forms of worship provided for another day or invented by man (Col 2:10-23).

As true Bereans we may differ on some things. But, brethren, we need each other and others need to hear these truths! What is it that shall bind us together, near and far? Recognition of truth alone will not do it. There must be the BOND OF MATURITY of Col 3:14. We must live the life described in Col 3:1-17.

The TIMES OF STRESS (2Ti 3) are upon us. We may not have much longer in which to work. This therefore may be our final opportunity to carry out Ephesians 3:9, TO MAKE ALL MEN SEE WHAT IS THE PLAN OF THE MYSTERY HIDDEN FROM AGES IN GOD WHO CREATED ALL THINGS. This is not a commission. We are not commanded to do it. But it is a blessed privilege. We must not muff it!

--SIDNEY A. HATCH

If we are going to be honest with ourselves and our Bible study we dare not select those verses that appeal to our sense of right and wrong, or believe all theories advanced by others. The only truth is that recorded by God in His Word.

Now if Paul writes of those things concerning the Gentiles, then we are duty bound to study his words. For he was the chosen apostle to the Gentiles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit (1Ti 4:1)..

He captions his epistles in this manner, I PAUL, THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU GENTILES...AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST BY THE WILL OF GOD, TO THE SAINTS WHICH ARE AT EPHESUS... COLOSSE...etc. In contrast Peter and James of the 12, and Stephen, address their words to, YE MEN OF ISRAEL (Ac 2:22; 7:2; Jas 1:1).

Paul acknowledges this *mystery* to be the final revelation of God concerning His church. Under this *mystery* he lists those things we have been studying during the past year.

First, he states that this gospel was revealed to him to complete the Word of God (Col 1:25), that it had been hidden in God since before the foundation of the world (Eph 3:9).

Second, he states that this gospel reveals the mystery of a joint body, where no man has the pre-eminence, all being equal in the sight of God, as seen thru His Son. The Jew no longer has the advantage; no signs or gifts to demonstrate his prior position. This is a new creation in Christ, who is the Head.

Third, this hope in view during the mystery is spoken of as a heavenly hope. Or, as Mr. Hatch so aptly put it in last month's article, *an above hope* (Eph 2:6). This sphere of blessing is identified with Christ in that we are raised and seated with Him. IF YE BE RISEN WITH CHRIST SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE...NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH (Col 3:1,2). LET NO MAN THEREFORE JUDGE YOU IN MEAT, OR DRINK OR IN RESPECT OF AN HOLYDAY, OR OF THE NEW MOON, OR OF THE SABBATH DAYS; WHICH ARE A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME (Col 2:16,17). But rather we should hold to the Head which is Christ. FOR YE ARE DEAD AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD. WHEN CHRIST WHO IS YOUR LIFE SHALL APPEAR THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY (Col 3:4).

Fourth, there is a purpose for this Body created by God. Just as Israel was to be a witness to the peoples of the earth, so is the Body to be a witness to the heavens. IN ORDER THAT THE RULERS IN THE HEAVENLIES MAY BE MADE KNOWN THROUGH THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD (Interlinear, Eph 3:10).

All these points of doctrine we have studied in the past year. One by one we have seen where they fit into the will of God. Now, where do they fit into your will?

Will you acknowledge the Word of God and the dispensation of the mystery as recorded by Paul, or will you *WILL* to do otherwise?

Satan aspired to be as the Most High. Adam looked for knowledge outside the will of God. Scribes and Pharisees established their own righteousness. What about you?--DENTON C. ABBEY

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER

The writer is Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus). Paul claims that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus. This is no counter claim to that of the twelve. Paul recognized their apostleship. It did not conflict with his own. Neither was Paul an apostle because of any human merit. It was only by God's gracious will.

In sending greetings, Timothy is also included along with Paul. At times Paul speaks of Timothy as being his son in the faith, but here Timothy is counted as a brother in the faith.

This letter was written to the consecrated saints at Colosse. They are spoken of as being steadfast in their allegiance to Christ. They are the faithful in Christ. Faithful means that they are filled with or full of faith.

In his greeting, Paul desires that grace (the well-spring of all mercies) and peace (the crown of all blessings) be bestowed upon them from God the Father. God, as Father, is desirous of bestowing the best gifts upon His children.

Paul is always thankful for these faithful ones at Colosse. He literally pours forth his thanksgiving to God the Father on their account. He does this whenever he prays. And why should Paul be so thankful for them? Do they have no faults? It was not so with the Corinthians!

In his praise for them, Paul mentions three words; faith, love, and hope. He was thankful for the good tidings of the faith which they had in Christ Jesus. He was thankful for the love which they showed forth towards all people of God. He was thankful that they were looking forward to the hope which was stored up for them in heaven.

This hope was a great treasure laid up for the life to come. It was centered in a Person, for He is our Hope. This hope had been communicated to them before. Paul had been teaching in prison. His gospel had been carried far and wide into all the Roman provinces. The Roman world had heard this gospel in all its purity and integrity. It had not been watered down yet by religionists and Judaizers. It had also shown approval of itself by fruits wherever it was planted. It had especially done so at Colosse.

In fact the fruits were in evidence from the first day they had received the gospel and had their first lessons therein. They had apprehended the power of the genuine gospel. This gospel was not a law of ordinances, but a dispensation of grace. It was not a mere device of men, but it was the truth of God.

It was this powerful and pure gospel that was ministered unto them by Epaphras, who was a beloved fellowservant of Paul in the Master's household. On behalf of Paul in his absence, Epaphras had faithfully delivered to them the gospel of Christ. It was he that had delivered to Paul the good news of their faith, love, and their looking forward to the hope.

Paul especially mentions and commends their love which they showed forth in the spirit (the new man or new nature which is implanted in all true believers).

Today, little groups here and there should note the example of that little band.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

TRUTH FOR TODAY is a monthly publication edited by Oscar M. Baker for the purpose of agitating, aggravating, and inciting folks to read and study the Bible as the Word of God. It is free to anyone anywhere upon request.

GUEST WRITERS in this issue; Denton C. Abbey of Mentone, Ind., and Sidney A. Hatch of 5749 Hillcrest Dr., Los Angeles 43, Calif.

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A. J. HARROP, well-known as the editor of *The Babbler*, fell asleep Aug. 13th. Further details in the September Babbler.

AN ALPHABETICAL ANALYSIS, Vol. 8 (prophetic) by C. H. Welch, \$2.25 each.

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VISITORS are welcome. We can eat and sleep you too. Several have been here this summer. Be sure to warn us. Write Oscar M. Baker, R 2, Warsaw, Ind., or telephone (Atwood) Ulysses 8-2684.

THIS ISSUE is the beginning of our 12th yr. Thanks for all your help and prayers. Our many friends have meant a lot to us.

THE SIGN POST, a booklet of 24 articles by A. J. Harrop, 30¢. Same by Stuart Allen, 30¢.

PRAY FOR the many new classes that are being formed these days, both in this country and in several others.

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