

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #74

STEPS TO A GOAL #24

IN LOVE MAY GROW UP UNTO HIM, THE ALL THINGS, WHICH IS THE HEAD. EVEN CHRIST. 4:15.

We have taken the liberty of moving a comma. Why? It does not interfere with the sentence structure in the Greek, and it does parallel the expression in the doctrinal section, THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND (3:17,18).

The growth is dependent on the being rooted in love. So in love we should grow up unto Him. All too often man wants to substitute fear for love. But here it is: no love, no growth. Our Lord when here on earth made it plain that discipleship was based on love, more love for Christ than for any other thing in all the creation. The Decalogue is all founded on love; the first half being love to God, and the latter half on love to neighbor. Our Lord gave a new commandment to His disciples in that they should love one another. He also said that it was by their loving one another that the world should know that they were His disciples.

How can love be demonstrated? How can we know that we love the brethren? How can we know that a man is a true teacher? We might answer by saying that God gave a demonstration of His love for the world by giving His only begotten Son. That was a concrete example, an act, that proved the fact. Need more be said?

We are not separate from Christ and then have to grow into Him. This is not the meaning of this passage. There can be no growth apart from the Head. This is carrying on the gist of verse 13. It is a growing up unto the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is growing according to pattern. It is growing up unto a Christ-likeness. It is not an imitation of Christ, or trying to act like Him. This is a growth, an inward growth, from being rooted and grounded in love. It is no outward show. It is not something put on.

There is no preposition before ALL THINGS. You have heard somebody say, *Christ is everything to me*. That is something of the sort here. We have similar expressions, such as, ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD. There are some who are so degraded in their thinking and their idea of God that they would include sin in this ALL THINGS. Now when a person says that Christ is everything to him, does he mean that Christ is sin to him? Not if he is sane! Always you will find this ALL THINGS in the context somewhere. In this chapter, just go back and read what some of these things are that Christ is to us. See the unity, the gifts, the measure, etc.

Do not miss the twofold likeness of the church here. As in the doctrinal section, so here we have both body and temple. Members of the body are to be rooted in love. The temple is grounded (refers to foundation) in love. Look back and see how these aspects work out.

In the next verse the body is being edified (built up). Compare with Col 2:7 where both ROOTED and BUILT UP are used.

The mystery is not some creed that one can subscribe to or a movement to join, but is a matter of the heart. Growth is a *must*.

When Moses stopped before the burning bush in the wilderness, he was given a new revelation. This revelation was a most important thing in the history of Israel. It was the revelation of God, not as Creator, but as Jehovah. This is the first time this name was given to man. It is a covenant name and links God with His people, Israel. It was to be known also by the nations, but in a very terrible manner, not by any means by a covenant or any such relationship.

Jehovah is the title, I AM. In this are combined all the past, present, and future. In it is the power that led out of Egypt, the power that destroyed the Egyptians, and melted the hearts of the heathen till they were like water.

WHEREFORE SAY UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. I AM THE LORD, AND I WILL BRING YOU OUT FROM UNDER THE BURDENS OF THE EGYPTIANS, AND I WILL RID YOU OUT OF THEIR BONDAGE, AND I WILL REDEEM YOU WITH A STRETCHED OUT ARM, AND WITH GREAT JUDGMENTS: AND I WILL TAKE YOU TO ME FOR A PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE TO YOU A GOD: AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD (Ex 6:6,7). Now how did Israel learn concerning their God? By the things they experienced, both in leaving Egypt and what they learned in the wilderness.

They saw with their own eyes the great works of God. They saw their own redemption which at the same time involved the destruction of their enemies. They saw the sea open. They saw the cloud and the pillar. They saw the presence of God in Sinai. They saw the face of Moses shine after that he had talked with Jehovah. They had food and water provided.

AND THE EGYPTIANS SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, WHEN I STRETCH FORTH MY HAND UPON EGYPT, AND BRING OUT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM AMONG THEM (Ex 7:5). They first knew the terribleness of Jehovah when the plagues came upon them ending with the death of the firstborn. Then they knew it again when their king and his army sank like lead in the Red Sea.

Now you can readily see that there are two aspects of the knowledge of Jehovah. Those who know Him as Redeemer know His love and His benefits. Those who are not the redeemed see Him as a terrible God of vengeance.

We see here the beginning of the great purpose of God to make Himself known to all the world by His people, Israel. Thru the centuries to follow, nations come into contact with this people and learn of Jehovah. Then came the great Redeemer from Israel, born of a virgin, and who gave to His workers the great commission of evangelizing the world, teaching them concerning Jehovah, now the risen Christ.

For a time now, this program has been suspended. A new program has come in. Today it has to do with making known the ways and wisdom of God, not among the nations, but among the principalities and powers of the heavenlies. When that program is completed, God will again deal with His people Israel. The great commission will go forward. The new covenant will come in. Then the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of God.

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER (CONT.)

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

It is evident that no one ever received such a full and high and exalted revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ as did Paul. He goes on to say that all powers in heaven and in the earth are subject to Christ. This subjection extends from the least to the most powerful and most exalted of angelic beings. Whether they may be called thrones or dominions or principedoms or powers, all are subject to Christ. No title of dignity that man has ever known is higher than Christ. All are under Him.

Paul goes on to say that Christ is first and also that He is last. He is first because of the fact that He made everything that exists. The Maker must precede the creature. He is last because that God has declared that when all else has passed away, Christ remains. By His mediatorial word all things were created. Toward Him, as a goal, is the whole creation tending. He knows nothing of the words *before* and *after*. Nothing could exist before Him and nothing can exist after Him.

Before all the ages He was pre-existent and self-existent. By His sustaining power all things cohere and stand. Without Him there would be nothing.

But the apostle goes even farther. He says that not only does Christ hold this position of absolute priority and sovereignty over the universe which is the natural creation, but He holds a similar position in regard to the church. This is another creation, a spiritual creation. He is its Head, and it is His body. No one could deny this as His right for He is the source and the beginning of its life. All because He is the firstborn from the dead. So then in all things; whether in the spiritual order or in the natural, whether in the church or in the world, He is found to have the pre-eminence. There is none before Him, either in time or position.

All this absolute supremacy is His because of one great astounding fact. Just because that it was the Father's good pleasure that in Christ all the fulness of Deity should dwell, should have its home. The Father has willed that thru the Son the whole universe, material and spiritual, should be reconciled to Himself once more. Peace, harmony, and life come thru the blood of Christ. It is thru the blood of the cross that all things are to be restored to perfection. The works of the devil and the devil himself are to be destroyed and there will again be life in all the creation. There will be no remembrance of the former things.

Paul then reveals why that he can rejoice in his sufferings. He has seen the full extent of God's mercy. He has pondered over the mighty work of reconciliation. He can do nothing else but choose to rejoice. Paul sees that he, the persecutor, feeble and sinful, is permitted to supplement the sufferings of Christ. Not that he has any part in the atonement or vicarious sufferings of Christ, no, not that. But Paul, too, can see a sinful world and agonize over its lost condition, even as Christ did. He also can bear in his body the marks (stigmata) of persecution, even as did Christ. This is his privilege.

There has been much disputing about the question of when the church of the mystery began. Or when the church of the one body began. Or when the present dispensation began. And so on and on it goes.

The main issue, the point that would solve it all, is scarcely mentioned. It is a point about which there can be little debate. It is a fixed point and about which all else revolves that pertains to the dispensation of the mystery. That point is *when the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles*.

Oh no, it can't be that simple! That is what many will say. But did you ever stop to think why they try to confuse the issue? What are the ulterior motives? Why do they try to confuse people? Turn to Titus 1:10, 11.

Suppose you want to go see a friend whose house you have never seen. Suppose that friend has given you the street name and the number of the house. That then is specific. But in the meantime some others have given you various directions, such as it might be a pink house, there is a low hedge in front, it has a slate roof, it has 2 tall elms in front, etc. What are you going to look for; the street and the number of the house, or vague descriptions some others have given you? Suppose you do find that street and number, but the house does not fit the descriptions that so many have given? What do you do? Go to some other house with a different number and call there? Of course not! Street and number are specific.

So it is with the question in hand. There is just one place where we are told that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and that is at the end of Acts. To try to fit in anything that must depend on this great fact in any other place than after this event is utter foolishness.

Look up salvation in your concordance. See how that after the nations were given up at Babel the salvation of God is with Israel. In John 4:22 our Lord tells the Samaritan woman that salvation is of the Jews. In Romans 11:11 we are told that salvation is come to the Gentiles, but it is via the good olive tree, Israel. Only at Acts 28:28 are we told that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles.

There are some who would quibble about the tense of the verb SENT. However that makes no difference. Until the fact was revealed, there could be nothing built upon it. Their arguments are pointless.

It all boils down to this one thing; we must believe that plain statement or not believe it. The salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28 or Luke was wrong and not inspired to make the statement.

It is very popular these days to snipe at Paul and enumerate his mistakes. It is just another way atheists in the pulpits have of denying the Word of God. Down thru the ages have echoed the words, HATH GOD SAID (Ge 3:1)! The enemies of God and His Word still use them.

The foundational fact and the time of the beginning of the church of the dispensation of the mystery depends on the word, SENT.

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #3

IF I ASCEND UP INTO HEAVEN, THOU ART THERE;
IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD, THOU ART
THERE (Ps 139:8).

If the discouraged child of God wants something to lift up his heart, let him turn and read Psalm 139. here is that *cradle to the grave* security that the economic planners of this world would like to create for us. In the Lord we already have it--and much more. God can provide far better than the wisest of this old world.

The Psalm tells of God's knowledge, presence and power. The child of God is always in the presence of God. The above verse is a beautiful illustration of the hope that is ours.

We would like to stand in the glory of heaven without experiencing death (or the naked state). WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY (Col 3:4). We hope the first phase of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is so very near that we shall soon see THE HIGH CALLING (Ph'p 3:14). But it may not be, and in that case we must MAKE OUR BED here.

The familiar translation, IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, is an unfortunate distortion of the comforting truth of this verse (or it might be the popular misconception of hell. Ed.). The Hebrew word is sheol and should be translated THE GRAVE. (Compare Ge 37:35 where Jacob is weeping for his son Joseph and says, I WILL GO DOWN INTO THE GRAVE (sheol) UNTO MY SON MOURNING.

The BED thus speaks of the sleep of death until the resurrection. But even then we are forgotten, as the Psalmist makes clear. Our names are recorded in the heart of God. YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD (Col 3:3).

Yes, from the cradle to the grave--and before and after--God watches over us, for verse 13 says, THOU HAST COVERED ME IN MY MOTHER'S WOMB. The Hebrew word for COVERED is sakak. It is the word used in those beautiful lines of Job, THOU HAST CLOTHED ME WITH SKIN AND FLESH, AND KNIT ME TOGETHER WITH BONES AND SINEWS. THOU HAST GRANTED ME LIFE AND LOVINGKINDNESS; AND THY CARE HATH PRESERVED MY SPIRIT (10:11-12 ASV).

As in the past, how much more in the future! We anticipate living again and dwelling in the presence of Christ, the Lord of glory (Ph'p 3:11).

Take heart, weary pilgrim. Do not be disheartened by difficulties. They are meant to make us strong. We are engaged in pushing the frontiers of truth. Of the pioneers of old it was said, *The cowards never started and the weak never arrived.* (We can be thankful that in this realm, by virtue of His grace and security, the weak are allowed to arrive, tho they may not reign, (2Ti 2:12).

Whither shall we go from His spirit? Whither shall we flee from His presence? If we could lift up the wings of the dawn, or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there His right hand should hold us! Lead us, O God, in the way everlasting.

--SIDNEY A. HATCH

People have been bamboozled, propagandized, and lulled into the theory that the most essential thing in Christianity is, *We must be good in order to escape hell.* This is simply a new twist to the old lie that we can buy our way out with silver and gold. If you are bad, or slip and commit sin, then you are relegated to the reign of Satan. However, if you should measure up to society's criteria of *good*, then you can escape this fiery punishment.

Where this theory leaves any room for the resurrection that we read about in the Scripture I am at a loss to discover. But then with most modern theories, one is not supposed to ask searching questions. However the explanation given is that people don't die, but live on as spirit beings. Then at the coming of the Lord they are judged as to where they shall spend eternity. No, that can't be because, TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD. Then it must be in purgatory that they spend this intermediate period. Then at the coming of the Lord they are released--? No, because some of them get out before that provided enough masses and money are available. Really I'm not sure what the traditional answer is. No one has ever been able to explain this doctrine (Scripturally) to a satisfactory conclusion.

But when we turn to the Bible, we find something entirely different: *that Christ came into the world to save sinners; He died for the sins of the world; while we were yet sinners Christ died for us; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; we can only be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.* So of what use are your good works and money?

The condemnation that has come upon the world is *death*. WHEREFORE, AS BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN; AND SO DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN, FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED (Ro 5:12). So the judgment of condemnation that is upon the world is *death*; the free gift is life. No wonder we read in verse after verse in the Bible that Christ is the resurrection and the life. It is from this condemnation, death, that we are released. Is there any intimation here that Christ is to save us from hell? No, it is to raise us from the dead. Hear what He said to Martha, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD YET SHALL HE LIVE (Joh 11:25).

It was here that the Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. Then, WHY SHOULD IT BE THOUGHT A THING INCREDIBLE WITH YOU, THAT GOD SHOULD RAISE THE DEAD (Ac 26:8). Paul spoke these words before Agrippa, in his defense and for the hope of Israel. Then in verse 23, after telling of his conversion, he continues, THAT CHRIST SHOULD SUFFER, AND THAT HE SHOULD BE THE FIRST THAT SHOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD.

But orthodoxy demands that these words of Paul be refuted. So text after text is wrested from its context to deny the truth. People *must not know God's truth* concerning the Quick and the Dead.

--DENTON C. ABBEY

IS IT A SMALL THING?

THE EDITOR'S DESK

When Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, was it not a small thing to do? There was plenty of fruit and all free. Why should there be a restriction on just one?

Was it not a small thing that Cain should change the orders a bit and make an offering of his own choice? He meant well, did he not?

Was it not a small thing that Aaron's sons should take strange fire into the tabernacle. After all, fire is fire, and what difference could it make?

Was it not a small thing that David should take another man's wife? All the Kings of the nations did and that nothing of it.

Was it not a small thing that Saul should keep some of the nice cattle and king Agag? Everybody did it.

Was it not a small thing that Achan should keep some of the loot of Jericho? To the victor belongs the spoils.

Was it not a small thing that Moses should get angry with the people and smite the rock, not once, but even twice? Isn't righteous anger excusable?

Was it not a small thing that Jacob should cheat his brother and deceive his father? He was to have all these things anyway, was he not?

Was it not a small thing that Abraham should pass off his wife as his sister on two different occasions? It was a half truth and what could it hurt? He had to be careful about his life.

Was it not a little thing that Ananias and Sapphira should fib about their income? It was nobody's business.

Was it not a little thing that Peter should deny knowing the Lord? He had to save his face, did he not?

You know the answers. You know how important it was under law that one should obey God. But how about today, when believers are under grace and not law? When no penalties are inflicted and men can go on in their own ways without any divine intervention, are such things now small things?

Is it a small thing that men should worship with ritual, a place, and a priesthood when God has made known His desire for spiritual worship?

Is it a small thing that we should observe a feast, a carnal baptism, or the like when under grace?

Is it a small thing that we should take the love and provision of God for granted and without thankfulness?

Is it a small thing that we should make rules and ordinances where God has made none?

Is it a small thing that we should make use of the lie of the devil in order to scare folks into joining our little band?

Is it a small thing that men and women should put away their mates and marry others when God hates even separation?

Yes, we can get by these days with anything! God is dealing with His people in grace. But a time is coming when all have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. What then? Can we take advantage of God's grace and do as we please without paying some time?

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