

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #78

STEPS TO A GOAL #28

WALK NOT AS GENTILES WALK...BEING ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD THROUGH THE IGNORANCE THAT IS IN THEM, BECAUSE OF THE BLINDNESS OF THEIR HEART. 4:17, 18.

This time our study is centered in the word ALIENATED. Once before in this epistle we found that Gentile believers during Acts were *aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel. That was distance. It had to do with dispensational disadvantage. But now it has been remedied by the blood of Christ. Here in chapter 4 it is more than distance. It is death. There is only one remedy. That is to accept the gift of life with its promise of resurrection. This gift of life is to *whosoever*.

In connection with alienation we usually think of an enemy. In these triangles we hear so much about in the courts where one charges another with alienation of affections, this enmity is brot out. There is an enemy behind this alienation, it is true, but the near reason in this context is ignorance. Ignorance results from following the enemy. Once he was the sum of wisdom, but that wisdom has become corrupt thru disobedience and separation from God. So it was with these ungodly Gentiles.

The same bait is just as effective today as it was back in the time of Adam. He was given knowledge when he was created, but not all knowledge. So when he was offered the knowledge of good and evil (the sum of all knowledge), man grasped at it. It was not yet time for that. God would have given man all knowledge in due time. But man was like the dog crossing the stream with a bone in his mouth. He saw in the water another dog with a bone (or that he did), and so he tried to grasp that bone too. He lost that which he did have in trying to grasp a reflection. So man made a grab for all knowledge and lost what he had. That accounts for much of his ignorance.

Vanity of their mind, understanding darkened, are some of the steps leading to that terrible condition. In this case mind and understanding are practically the same thing. As man turned from God to idols, whatever they might be, his mind became empty or vain. He turned to the indulgence of the fleshly desires. This can only cause darkening of the understanding. *Ignorance set in and finally blindness of heart*.

Now Paul is warning these believers that they should not act like the ungodly Gentiles act. Their calling and hope are too high for such actions. They cannot maintain a high spiritual level and indulge the flesh. And of course we well know that if they were to walk as the ungodly Gentiles walk, they will have no witness to the world. Nobody is going to have confidence in their profession.

Certainly there is good reason here in this passage as to why one should not walk in such a manner. *Vanity, darkness, ignorance*, and even *blindness* can creep into the life of the believer and rob him of his reward or crown. These things can make him an unprofitable servant. There is such a thing as a wicked believer. We should be careful!

In our study of the Word we have discovered 5 unconditional covenants which God has made. As a usual thing, the first 4 are all that are mentioned. But the one which was first in point of time is last mentioned in the Word.

The first 4 are;

1. Promise of the Redeemer (Ge 3:15).
2. Covenant made with Abraham (Ge 12-22).
3. Covenant made with David (2Sa 7).
4. The New covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

We shall discuss these more fully later, but now let us look at a promise that comes long before any of these.

This promise is first mentioned in Eph 3:6. There it is a *promise in Christ*. Again it is mentioned in 2Ti 1:1 and there it is a *promise of life in Christ Jesus*. Again it is mentioned in Tit 1:2 and there it is *eternal life promised by God before the ages began*.

It is obvious that this promise or covenant was not made with man for it was made long before man came on the scene. Before the ages began is a long time before Adam. So this promise must have been made with beings who were created before man. It is unlikely that these beings were earth beings, but inhabited the heavenlies. We know them as principalities and powers.

This then gives us a clue as to why this covenant was never mentioned until we get to Ephesians. The 4 covenants mentioned above were made to people who expect to spend the future resurrection life here on earth. So they have little interest in principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

But just as soon as the dispensation of the mystery was made known and some were given the hope of inhabiting the heavenlies in resurrection, this promise was made known. The saints and faithful are joint partakers in this promise (Eph 3:6). The members of the dispensation of the mystery have a great interest then in this covenant.

It is also true that Satan has a great interest in this covenant, but in a different way. It has to do with his present domain. He does not want to lose it. But he will be cast out some day, and then it will be inhabited by a people chosen from before the foundation of the world for that very purpose. This is parallel to the driving out of the Canaanite and the people of Israel taking over the land. These parallels point to a great deal of truth.

Also this covenant does have a great deal to do with the other 4. It is really the basis upon which they are carried out. More of that later.

When we say that this covenant is unconditional we mean that it is not dependent on what man may or may not do. Neither is it dependent on what *any* of God's creatures may or may not do. God said that he was going to do something about sin which came into the universe bringing death with it. The only antidote for that dreadful condition is life. That life was to be in Christ Jesus. When He came to earth He said that He came that men might have life. He only has immortality. Ponder on these things.

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER (CONT.)

THE MEANING OF RESURRECTION

The apostle declares that now, in the new creation, the decree of the council at Jerusalem has been erased. The distinction between Jew and Gentile is gone, enmity has been abolished. In the new creation Christ must be supreme. No shadows can enter where the reality, the substance is.

At the time it was made, it was not known that the decree was temporary and would cease. It was not so great a bondage as the law, nevertheless it was a bondage and against the Gentiles, marking them off as inferior beings. But all that has been put out of the way, being nailed to His cross never to revive again.

And by this same cross, the symbol of disgrace and shame, and seemingly a victory for the forces of evil, He overcame principalities and powers and led them in a triumphal procession for all the universe to see. He completely turned the tables on them and they followed Him in chains, abject slaves, dragging their finery in the dust. What a victory!

Then the apostle gives a very solemn warning to these Colossian saints. They have been freed from the law of ordinances. That has been repealed. But they are to be careful that they do not subject themselves to its bondage again. Being free, they by no means are to let any man call them to account in the matter of eating or drinking, whether it be the Passover or some other feast. They are free from festivals, new moons, and even Sabbaths. All these are of the law which was added to Israel's promise because of transgressions. There is not one single ritual or ordinance that must be observed. These are but shadows thrown in advance that people might know what was to come. But now the substance, the body, the reality is Christ.

It is clear then that the observance of any ritual is of the flesh and is not a part of worship in spirit and truth. All such detract from the reality, Christ. He demands first place.

Then Paul tells them that the reward, the crown is well within their reach. They are to be very careful that no man beguile them of it. There was danger that they be robbed by false teachers. They are to beware of all their stratagems.

The religion of these false teachers is a counterfeit humility. But it ends up in the worship of angels, which is no more than idolatry. They may parade their visions and special revelations, but these are empty boasts. Professing humility, they are vain and proud and even boastful. They are puffed up. Their vaunted wisdom is only the mind of the flesh, foolishness in the sight of God.

The chief of their follies is the fact that they have lost their grasp of Christ as Head. They have invented and introduced other spiritual agencies beside the one true Mediator and Head. These agencies are none other than angels or heavenly beings. They have dragged Christ to the level of these beings. So they worship angels, not Christ.

These religionists are to be avoided. They add nothing to true worship in Spirit.

1. It was a historical event. There were plenty of witnesses. Even the historian, Josephus, bears witness to the fact. In this day there are many who go no farther than the historical fact. There is really no meaning in the event for them. Tradition has made it of none effect.

2. It means that Christ lives. That is a step farther on the way. At least we can be assured that we have a living Savior, not a dead one. It is true that the great mass of Christendom worships either a dead Christ on a cross, or an empty cross. Neither is indicative of a hope. But again tradition has obscured the truth. If man does not die, but is immortal, then Christ would have lived anyway and so would all men. So why bother with a resurrection? That is just about all it means to the religious world today.

3. To many it means that all will live again some day. They see this in the reviving of plants in the spring. All seemed to be dead during the winter, but when spring comes, then all things seem to revive. The ancients saw this and so they instituted the worship of Astarte, from which Christendom got its Easter. But all that is founded on the theory of the immortality of the soul. It is not really resurrection.

4. The words of the song, *Because He lives, I too shall live*, begins to give some real meaning to the fact of resurrection. Paul was sure of what resurrection should mean. He reasoned that if there be no resurrection, then Christ did not rise. And if Christ did not rise, then all have perished. Paul gave no room for the philosophy of an immortal soul. He knew and taught that death is death and if there be no resurrection there is no life. John knew that there must be life thru His name if there was to be any resurrection for the believer. Christ was the firstfruits of the great harvest that is to follow. Of all that have died, He is the only one that is living. He alone has had a resurrection. All the rest of the believing dead are still in the grave (hell).

5. Immortality as a gift, follows resurrection. In fact, practically all promises have their fulfillment in resurrection. It is resurrection that will finally bring Abraham into the land that was promised. It is resurrection that will enable Israel to fulfill the great commission. It is only in resurrection that any person will attain unto sinless perfection. And we might add a great deal more to the list. It is only in resurrection that we have release from the presence of sin.

From the above it is easy to see why that Christendom thinks of resurrection about once in a year. Beyond being a historical fact concerning our Lord, it has little significance to them. They precede their worship of Easter by a period of mourning for Tammuz (Lent). These rules have indeed an appearance of wisdom, where there is self-imposed worship and an affectation of humility and ascetic severity. But they consist mainly in indulgence of the lower nature.

LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #7

You will find Paul saying this to Timothy in 1Ti 6:12. Like many others, you may have wondered what in the world this could mean. Did not Timothy already have eternal life? Was he not a young preacher? Why should he be told to lay hold on eternal life?

If we have defined eternal life from what we have learned from John's gospel, and especially 3:16, we might have reason to ask the questions above. A young man came to the Lord and asked what should be done to inherit eternal life. That would seem a foolish question. As we have been taught, eternal life is something that is not inherited and nothing can be done to gain it. We have understood it to be a free gift upon faith or believing.

But maybe it would be a good idea to check on what we think eternal life is and see if it really is in accord with the Word. Not only must we see how God uses a word, but also how that those who are writing by inspiration uses a word too.

If we look up every reference to eternal life and everlasting life in John's gospel and his 3 epistles, we find that he consistently uses it of a present possession, a gift of God which one receives upon belief, and it is something that is essential for resurrection. John says, HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE. So he uses the word *life* alone at times with the same meaning.

Now let us see how that Paul uses it. In Ro 2:7 eternal life is definitely something that comes after resurrection and is a reward. It comes as the result of good works on the part of a believer. And so it is used when Paul spoke to Timothy. He is telling Timothy to fight the good fight and work for the reward, prize, or crown. Now we begin to get some light. The rich young man was not asking the Lord how to be saved, but how to get a reward, a high place in the kingdom. He was already a believer, but like some of the disciples, he was looking for a position. Now that was quite all right. He should seek a high position, the highest possible, if he is willing to pay the price. The price was too high and he went away sorrowing. That is the attitude of most Christians today. They are not ready to pay the price. They think that being saved is enough, that there is nothing to do beyond that. And if they are asked to do any more than that, they too go away sorrowing.

So we conclude that eternal life is a reward at the end of a life of devoted service in all the NT except in John's writings, and there it is the receiving of a new life, new nature, the new man, the spirit, something which renews a man here and now and guarantees a resurrection hereafter. That is the opposite of perishing or failing to be resurrected.

This is right division, but not necessarily dispensational. Both aspects of eternal life are truth for today. Both aspects were truth yesterday. The Pharisees would not come to Christ that they might have life. The rich young ruler would not pay the price to receive the reward. It may be that we should look into the two aspects of this term more carefully.

In Art. #4 we gave a short study on the word *perish*. This is a translation of the Greek word *apollumi*. In that study we saw that the word *perish* or *apollumi* indicated death. The few references given also revealed that the meaning was death, die or lost. See TFT Vol. 12, No. 6.

Now if these souls were really dead, as indicated, we should be able to find other Scriptural proof. If they were not dead, but rather in a spirit state somewhere, this then should be revealed. To continue our study, let us look up the word *dead* to see if this is where those go who perish.

The Greek word that translates our English word *dead* is *nekros*. It is from this word that we get our English word *necrosis*, a word much used in medicine denoting dead tissue or putrefying flesh. Not a very pleasant reference, but needed to show you the meaning attached to this word, both in our day and in Paul's day.

With this background, let us look up the usage of the word *nekros*. Our concordance reveals that the word *nekros* or *dead* occurs 134 times in the NT, plus several other combinations of the word. Of a surety this paper has no room to check and record all these references. However, it is sufficient to know that of the 134 passages that contain the word *nekros*, every one is translated *dead*. There isn't a single passage that even gives a hint that these people are not dead. A few of the references will make this clear. M't 28:7, HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD. Lu 20:37, NOW THAT THE DEAD ARE RAISED. Ro 14:9, -BE LORD OF THE DEAD AND THE LIVING. ICo 15:52, THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE.

If the phrase in Joh 3:16, SHOULD NOT PERISH, doesn't mean to *die*, but rather some sort of a separation from God, then these references should reveal it. But does it? All the 134 references say *dead*, and the 90 times the word *apollumi* is used it says *perished*. Paul says in Ph'p 3:11, IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. This is an out-resurrection as indicated by the word *ex-anastasis*. The place he is being taken from is not a nebulous state, however, but a place of putrefaction (*nekros*). Paul considers himself as rotting in the grave. It is a blessing to know that this English word, along with the Greek, has not changed in the passing years, but means the same as 2,000 years ago.

If this were not so, why did Peter on the day of Pentecost, have this to say in Ac 2:31, NEITHER DID HIS FLESH SEE CORRUPTION? He knew that the reason for the raising of Christ on the third day was not only to fulfill prophecy, but to prevent this very *necrosis*. Notice that he uses the words *flesh* and *corruption*. Would a man of Peter's stature use such words if he knew people didn't really die?

But in the mouths of two witnesses is the truth established, for Paul says in Ac 13:36, FOR DAVID -- FELL ON SLEEP, AND WAS LAID UNTO HIS FATHERS, AND SAW CORRUPTION.

Which shall we believe, tradition or God? God has said that Christ was quickened, but David is still dead.

--DENTON C. ABBEY

DIFFICULT PASSAGES

Many have questions about some passages that usually are obscure because words have been left out and the ellipsis has not been filled. We will try paraphrasing some of these hoping that the reader will carefully compare and check our efforts.

John 11:23-26. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life for the last day; at that time I will come. The dead believers will rise and live. For them I am the resurrection. The living believers will never die. I am the life for them.

Philippians 1:-20,21. Now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For unto me, living is unto Christ's gain, and dying is unto Christ's gain. But if living in the flesh is Christ's gain, this unto me is a fruit of work. I am not telling you what I shall choose.

Romans 2:1-11. Therefore thou art inexcusable O Jew (verse 17), whosoever thou art that judgest for wherein thou judgest another (the Gentile), thou condemnest thyself; for thou (a Jew) that judgest doest the same thing. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

And thinkest thou this, O man (Jew), that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God in His judgment of believers. He will render to every believer according to his deeds.

He will render eternal life as a reward to them, who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality. He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man (believers) that doeth evil, who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness. All this on the Jewish believer first, and also the Gentile believer. He will render glory, honor, and peace to every believer that worketh good. This also to the Jew first, and to the Gentile. In the judgment of rewards, there is no respect of persons with God.

This much will give the key to the rest of the chapter. This epistle was written to saints at Rome and is not addressed to unbelievers. This must be kept in mind.

It is hoped that the reader will *catch on* to the principle here used. Care must be taken to see to whom it is spoken. The subject of the passage must be kept in mind. The context must be watched and understood words filled in. Extraneous ideas must be barred. It is not some idea we may have, but what God is saying, that is important.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

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