

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #96

4:32

AND BE YE KIND ONE TO ANOTHER, TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS GOD FOR CHRIST'S SAKE HATH FORGIVEN YOU.

In verse 31 we were told what to put away; bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice. Even common sense will tell a man to put away these things if he wishes to live long. All too often these things precede heart attacks and the like.

Then here in verse 32 we are told what to put on. The first is that we are to be *kind* one to another. This word is also used in Luke 6:35 where the disciples are told to love their enemies and do good, being reminded that God is *kind* to the unthankful and the evil. So it means that we are to be kind or actively beneficent in spite of ingratitude. It is easy enough to be kind to those who are kind to us, but here is a demand that goes beyond the activities of the old nature or flesh. It is not natural for a man to be kind to those who are enemies. So God's demands go beyond the ability of the flesh.

What a blow this is to Phariseeism! The fundamental Pharisee must curse all who do not believe in his particular creed. This spirit even got hold of some of the disciples and they would that Christ should call down fire from heaven upon those who did not walk with them. Be ye kind one to another.

And we are to be tenderhearted. This is tenderly or yearningly affectionate. If at times we feel that we have failed to get people interested in the study of the Word, it might be well to examine ourselves. Are we tenderhearted toward those we would win? Can we maintain that attitude even though they may oppose themselves to the truth? Can we take an insult and act as if nothing had ever happened? If not, then self is still in the way. As long as a man is bigger than the gospel he is trying to preach, he is a rank failure.

And we are to forgive one another, doing it graciously. Again this is beyond the ability of the flesh. Only the man who has the spirit or new nature can do this. And what is the reason or basis? Grace.

In M't 6:12, 14, 15, we find that there is a different basis for forgiveness. The man under law was condemned by the law. He was to ask forgiveness according to how he had forgiven others. But in the dispensation of the mystery, men are walking under grace, not law. Therefore God has already graciously forgiven them. It is because of this fact that they should be ready to graciously forgive others. If there is no law and God does not condemn, who are we that we should condemn our brethren?

In Col 3:13 we have it put a bit differently, but essentially the same; FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANY MAN HAVE A QUARREL AGAINST ANY: EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO DO YE.

Being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving are the things that mark the size of the Christian. How many of us have gotten stunted in our growth and are not only midgets, maybe, but even might turn out to be ugly dwarfs?

THE GOSPEL IN MATTHEW

All too many turn to Matthew thinking to find a gospel and truth for today. But if they really search, and think as they search, they may be quite surprised at what they find.

In all the gospel there is no mention of salvation being for Gentiles here and now. There are a couple of references to the millennium and the fact that then will the Gentiles trust Christ. But, so far as Matthew is concerned, Christ came to save His people (the Jews) from their sins. The Lord made it plain to the foreign woman that He was not ministering to dogs (Gentiles). Again He said that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The sermon on the mount was concerning the kingdom and its rules and regulations. The only church spoken of in Matthew is the church of Israel, the one which was in the wilderness and began with Abraham.

Matthew speaks of Christ as the king of the Jews, the lion of the tribe of Judah. He goes back to Abraham in His geneology to prove His right to the land and the promises to Abraham. He goes back to David to prove the Lord's right to the throne of David.

Matthew does not speak of the Lord having been in heaven with the Father prior to His birth in Bethlehem. Neither does he speak of the ascension. In fact, the last scene is where He is with the disciples giving instructions for a future ministry and telling them that He would be with them to the end of the age. There is nothing there about Him going away.

There is one hint in 26:64 about His going away for He says that Israel will see Him coming in power and great glory. That is still future and if He is to come, then surely He will have to go first. But there is no direct statement about the matter.

For a person today seeking salvation, there is no help for him in Matthew. There is not a single verse that can be quoted that will give him the slightest idea of what is required for the salvation of a Gentile today.

This is not an attempt to discredit Matthew in any way. He had a certain ministry to perform and he performed it. His gospel was to and for Israel at a certain time. To carry it over into another time and to another people will only bring confusion. If a Gentile today wants to know the way of salvation, then he will have to go to somebody who was commissioned to give that kind of message. But he will not find it in Matthew.

To take words that were specifically directed to the Jew and try to apply them to Gentiles is foolishness. But that is the cause of much of the confusion we find today.

Not only is there nothing in Matthew about the ascension of Christ, but there is no mention of anybody hoping to go to heaven. The kingdom of heaven is to be here on the earth. The King will be here to administer it. So there was no necessity of mentioning His ascension until Pentecost where Peter told the Jews that the heavens would retain Him till the time for all things to be restored.

THE DANGERS OF PERDITION

The believer always stands in danger of suffering loss (perdition). But never does he stand in danger of being lost. It may be that a few examples will suffice to show that we need to take heed how we stand.

Adam was created and placed in dominion of the earth. By sin he lost that place. The Last Adam has regained that lost dominion.

Cain was the firstborn. He wanted his own way, became angry, and murdered his own brother. He became a vagabond on the earth. Seth took his place.

Esau was the firstborn. He despised his birthright, sold it, and missed the blessing. Jacob took his place.

Reuben was the firstborn, but did not qualify to hold that position. Neither did Simeon or Levi. So Judah, the fourth, took that place.

Israel as a nation in Egypt was called God's firstborn (Ex 4:22). They were redeemed by the blood and led out. But all but 2 of those that were of age when they went out died in the wilderness and did not enter the land. Caleb and Joshua went in. Read Psa 90.

Ten of the 12 spies went over into the land, saw its goodness, ate of the fruit, and yet did not get to possess it. On the other hand, Rahab the idolater and harlot, had a place in it and in the genealogy of Christ.

Moses led the people out of Egypt and gave them the law. Yet he failed to get into the land because he became angry.

Saul was anointed king of Israel. He became a new man and the spirit caused him to prophesy. Yet because of disobedience he was rejected from being king of Israel. Then he sought light from the powers of darkness and died a suicide. David took his place.

Judas Iscariot walked with the Lord 3 years or more. He had great personal ambition. He was doubtless chagrined at the turn the kingdom was taking and so betrayed the King. Matthias took his place.

Paul, the apostle, was fearful lest that after he had preached to others, he might be a castaway. See 1Co 9:27.

In Heb 10:39 there is a warning about drawing back to perdition (loss). And in chapter 6 there is the added information that many who had tasted of the good things of the age to come, the signs and miracles that heralded the millennium, had drawn back unto loss and there was no place of repentance for them. Esau could find no place of repentance, either.

In Romans 11 the Gentile believers who were grafted in and partook of the dispensational blessings of Israel were warned not to boast against the tree lest they be cut out and lose their dispensational position and blessings.

We repeat, it is not a matter of salvation that we are discussing. That is safe and secure for the believer. But his position as to being firstborn, or a position of special service, is at stake and may be lost and taken by another. That is the danger every believer must face. It is a test to see whether he has *the stuff*. There is a reason we should pray for each other.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

This is the question a lot of new readers of TFT is going to ask. They will wonder why the title Truth For Today. And since we are having scores of new readers this month, we will try to make some explanation.

It is not likely that you have read very much church history. So probably you do not know some of the struggles in the early centuries to formulate creeds and forms of worship for an essentially Gentile church.

You see, it came about this way. At the end of the book of Acts, the salvation of God which had been of the Jews (Joh 4:22), was sent to the Gentiles (Ac 28:28). Now the Jews had the beginning of their church with Abraham, for their church had the promises (Gal 3:16,17). They also had the law, as is well known, and that law was in effect till the end of Acts. Romans 2:17 and many other references will show that to be true. But we pick Romans, for it was probably the last epistle of Paul before the end of Acts. These who had the law also had a place and a way of worship. No other place and way of worship was given for Gentiles. Salvation and all that went with it was the property of the Jews.

But since the Jews were blinded and set aside at the end of Acts, the question would soon come up as to what the Gentiles should do. The temple was destroyed and the Jews dispersed among the nations.

After the end of Acts John wrote his gospel and it was for this very situation. He quotes the Lord as saying in anticipation of this condition, BUT THE HOUR COMETH (AND NOW IS), WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH: FOR THE FATHER SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM (Joh 4:23). Read this in its context. What does it say about a place of worship? In such worship what rituals will be used, if any? Can true spiritual worship have forms and rituals? Can it have a priesthood?

Then the apostle Paul came along with his last 7 epistles after the last of Acts and he has further instruction in these matters. He does away with ordinances, feasts, and the like. Read Col 2 and 3.

John's gospel of everlasting life was not received. Folks insisted on trying yet to enter the kingdom which was of the Jews. Paul's gospel of grace was refused for it left nothing in the flesh for man to do and boast of. See 2Ti 1:15. Judaism was fast fading out as having any influence in the world.

By about 150 A D the "Apostolic Symbol" was adopted by many. But it was really in 325 A D at Nicea that a visible church was formed and set in motion. It was hard to decide what to put in and what to leave out. However they chose the most attractive points of Judaism and Babylon and mixed the two together. You can see it on every hand today. A visible church with a man at the head tried to take the place of the church which is the body of Christ with Him as Head. Ritual and law took the place of grace and true spiritual worship. *Today we are trying to get people back to the Bible.*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #5

A church council was called at Jerusalem to settle a question that arose about the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. We want to know just what the question was and if it had any relation to the dispensation of the mystery, as some claim.

The latter part of chapter 14 is taken up with the account of the return to Antioch and the report of the missionaries, Paul and Barnabas. Especially did they stress the fact that God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Notice the word *door* and remember the fact that to Peter were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (M't 16:19).

The council was called because that certain of those at Jerusalem (none of the 12) came to Antioch and insisted that unless the Gentile believers were circumcised, they could not be saved. They had good reason to say this for was not salvation of the Jews, the circumcision (Joh 4:22)?

Now some think that the church of the dispensation of the mystery began in Acts 13. If this is so, then this council should throw some light on it. Paul and Barnabas could not get in a word till Peter called them to order and gave his testimony. The strange thing that comes up here is just this; whatever Paul and Barnabas had been doing, Peter had done it first. If Paul and Barnabas were preaching the dispensation of the mystery in Acts 13, then Peter claims that he preached it first in Acts 10. This door that was open to Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 was the door that Peter opened in Acts 10. So Peter, not Paul, must have been the first to proclaim the dispensation of the mystery!

But if it was a question of Paul and Barnabas preaching the dispensation of the mystery, then what jurisdiction did the council in Jerusalem have in the matter? Also did not Paul fail in his trust if he were for a moment to let the 12 and others dictate in any matter pertaining to the mystery hid from ages and generations and revealed to him?

Peter is speaking for the Jews of Jerusalem and says (in verse 9) that God put no difference between those Gentiles and the Jews. Is this about the dispensation of the mystery?

In verse 10 is the question of putting upon these folks the yoke of the law. Was there ever any question of the law in connection with the dispensation of the mystery? Verse 12 tells of the miracles and wonders that were done among these Gentiles. Are miracles and wonders connected with the church of the dispensation of the mystery?

Then James takes the floor and proves from the prophets that what Paul and Barnabas did was according to the Scriptures. Was James here proving that the preaching of the dispensation of the mystery was backed up by the prophets? How does that agree with the fact that this mystery was hid from ages and generations?

What does the tabernacle of David have to do with the church of the mystery (verses 16,17). If the four things that were laid upon the Gentiles at that time were for the dispensation of the mystery, are they still binding?

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #25

DENTON C. ABBEY

Recently I was reading a book which pointed to Re 6:9 and 20:4 as proof that the spirits of the dead live on after the bodies have been interred. These 2 passages along with Re 12:11 should make the student pause to wonder. Do we live on after death as some would have us to believe? Do these passages refute our thinking in this series, *The Quick and the Dead*? At first glance the answer would appear to have to be in the affirmative. A second glance would make it appear doubtful. And a more serious approach would show it to be questionable.

I SAW UNDER THE ALTAR THE SOULS OF THEM THAT WERE SLAIN FOR THE WORD OF GOD, AND FOR THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY HELD: AND THEY CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING... (Re 6:9,10). This verse is repeated almost word for word in 20:4. However, in the first reference we are struck by the fact that these SOULS cry out to the Lord, which raises the question as to whether they are living souls. But in the second reference we are reminded that even as they can cry out, they are also of the first resurrection, and the rest of the dead lived not again for a 1,000 years, the Millennium.

Now where does this lead us? Were the souls alive ever since their death years before? Or were they resurrected just prior to the event described? If the rest of the dead lived not for the 1,000 years, where were they? Could they cry out? If they could, being souls as the first group, then their silence was no testimony to the Lord. Neither does it satisfy the context of the book to say these souls were all wicked ones. Re 20:15 will not support the contention that the reason for their tardy resurrection is due to their sins. Even if the majority of those in Re 20:15 are the wicked dead (or alive; I'm confused too), the WHOSEVER as found in the text allows for an indefinite number to be good or bad. The WHOSEVER does not cover any particular group. From the modern point of view, there must be a few good ones to give validity to the WHOSEVER, and from the fundamental angle there are certainly a few bad ones. However, if the correct translation IF is used, it delegates those found not filling the requirements of Re 15 to the lake of fire.

This is all supported by Re 20:12 where it is stated the BOOKS were opened. Now we find 2 sets of books here, book of life and books of deeds. If these people were all sinners as we are asked to believe, why open the books containing their deeds? Sinners are lost because they have not believed on the Son of God, therefore they are not written in the book of life (Joh 3:16). They are neither lost nor saved because of their deeds. If they are saved, it is by grace thru faith (Eph 2:5; Ro 5). So they could not be judged as to eternal life from the books of deeds unless first they were raised by virtue of their names being in the book of life. It does say that they are judged, not by the book of deeds, but by the book of life (20:15).

So again we come back to our subject at hand. If any of those quickened are found wanting in faith or belief, they are dead.

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

26. *In the light of Ro 11:2, are you not wrong in saying that God has set Israel aside or cast them off?*

The events of Acts 28 happened after Romans was written. So this statement in Romans is no longer true. Joshua 4:9 tells us that Joshua took 12 stones and put them in the Jordan and that they are there *unto this day*. This day is the day of the writing of the account and does not mean the date on which this paper was sent to you. Always note the sequence of events.

27. *To what nation is the kingdom to be given as indicated in M't 21:43?*

This has caused a great deal of controversy. But the answer is not too hard to find. There is a prophecy in Isa 66 about a new nation being born. This is still Israel, for to them belongs the kingdom. The kingdom was offered to those spoken of in Matthew. But it has been taken from them and will be given to the new nation of Israel when it is born.

28. *What is the meaning of the parable in M't 22:1-10 and who are those in the highways?*

This parable is prophetic. The first supper that was made ready was at the time our Lord was on the earth. His servants, the disciples, invited the guests. They would not come. Later the apostles made the second invitation during the Acts period. It was again refused and many of the apostles were martyred. Then there is a third invitation to those in the highways. These are those of Israel that are scattered among the nations. The servants who will gather them out are the angels. This will happen in the last days. Compare with M't 24:31.

29. *Why did Israel have all kinds of rituals and furnishings of the tabernacle to help with their worship, yet today we are expected to worship in spirit and truth (without these aids to worship)?*

Israel were slaves when they were led by the hand as little children from Egypt. So all these things pertaining to their worship were simply a picture book to lead them to the reality. These were shadows of things to come. Even to the Corinthians Paul could preach only Christ and Him crucified. They were babes, carnal Christians, and had need of milk. He could not preach any more than that to them for it would have been meat and they could not take it yet. In the dispensation of the mystery there is no place for babes. Shadows give place to reality. So these things have passed away.

30. *Somebody has said that the Bible says that women are not to be devils. Is that so?*

Yes, that is true. You will find it in 1Ti 3:11 where the wives of deacons are not to be slanderers (diabolos). The devil is a slanderer. This is the same word used of Judas in Joh 6:70. Also in Joh 13:2 this same word is used of the one who put it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord. This word devil may not be as strong as we think of it today. We must remember that it was to Peter that the Lord said, GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN. This is another word, but the meaning is not too much different. Each believer should make sure he is not a devil.

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