

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #100

5:4

NEITHER FILTHINESS, NOR FOOLISH TALKING, NOR JESTING, WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT; BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS.

These are a continuation of things from verse 3 which were not once to be named among believers, those who had become saints. We only wish that here we could also refrain from the very mention of these things, but all too many have never had these things brot to their minds. They have not read carefully what is God's will for the saints today. So we must warn folks.

1. Filthiness. This refers to vice in all its deformity and hideousness. There is a law of the human mind that by which there can be aroused evil sympathy at the mention of vices in their worst form. This is due to the filthiness of a tainted imagination. And so in time the very worst can become attractive. That is why such things should never be mentioned.

2. Foolish talking. A good name for this is fool-talk. For it is the conversation of fools. It is the trifling with evil things lightly as if they were not so bad after all. But can the saint talk lightly about things that are an abomination to God? This could also include current frankness in discussing openly and in mixed groups matters of sex, which sacred in themselves, become common and profane on the lips of fools. They are better not mentioned.

3. Jesting. The popular joke with the double meaning which arouses ribald laughter comes in here. It is the opposite of pure and wholesome mirth which comes from real Christian joy. People vie with each other in saying things which are lawful speech, but suggest things most foul. These are the awful fruits of the carnal mind. They reveal the natural total depravity of the Adamic nature. They are better not mentioned.

All these things are not convenient. They are not befitting one who has become a saint. Such unseemly behavior does not honor God, but is enmity to the cross of Christ. They furthermore expose the fact that those who practice such things still worship the belly-god. The only course for the saint is, NEVER NAME IT.

The rest of the verse gives us a positive course. And not only that, but a protection from these things which are not to be mentioned among saints. When real thanksgiving is on the lips, a thanksgiving that comes from the heart, one is more or less proof to the temptation to indulge in these inconvenient and foolish things.

Israel's repeated failures could be traced, in part if not wholly, to the fact that they were not thankful. They murmured, they lapsed into idolatry and the accompanying immoralities.

In Romans 1 we are told that one of the main reasons the nations were given up was because NEITHER WERE THEY THANKFUL. In Philippians 4 we are given a formula for prayer. All requests are to be mixed with thanksgiving. An unthankful child brings shame to its parents. Let us be careful in our relationship to our Father in heaven that we do not bring shame and disgrace to His name among men by being unthankful.

Thankfulness would be a good topic for study and discussion by a group of saints.

JEW AND GENTILE

Probably the average person has read his Bible enough to realize that there are two classes of people prominent in the Book. He does not go far till he discovers the names *Gentile* and *Jew*. But they may not mean very much outside of his everyday business dealings with Jews and others. In fact, not many seem to know that God has ever made any difference between Jew and Gentile. The ubiquitous Universalist-Modernist preacher will tell you that the only difference was in the mind of the Jew who got the idea that he was a superior race and gave the name *Gentile* to the rest.

But in dealing with revelation instead of mere opinions of men, we find that there was no division until the call of Abraham. At Genesis 12 a distinction was made. God made a special promise to Abraham and his seed. So it was to a special people. But it also involved a land, a land that was promised to Abraham and his seed.

The reason for this division or distinction is clearly given in Romans 1:18-32. About the time of the building of the tower of Babel, idol worship appeared and spread over the earth rapidly like a plague. Even Abraham's father was engulfed in this great wave of idolatry. We can almost trace its path in the OT thru Egypt, Philistia, Palestine, and Chaldea. On account of this plague, and with it the grossest immoralities imaginable, God gave up the nations to their vile ways. He started a new nation thru Abraham which eventually would be free from all this vileness. Also this nation would be a mediator nation between God and the other nations. It was to make known the name of Jehovah among the nations of the earth.

This nation came from Abraham thru Isaac and Jacob. To this nation alone was given the law. The Gentiles have never been under the law. It never was intended for them.

To the nation *Israel* is promised the great millennial kingdom here on the earth. Overcomers from among the Jews will reign with Christ at that time. A few Gentiles will have a part in that kingdom by special arrangements only. *The millennium is not the hope of the church.* Neither is the New Jerusalem. The great city, made in heaven and let down to the earth (the new earth), was promised to Abraham and his seed. It is not the hope of any believer today. But that statement will bring to mind the fact that there must be a difference between Jew and Gentile. But is there?

That is the hard part to understand. There was a time (from Ge 12 to Acts 28:28) when there was a difference between Jew and Gentile. But today there is none. *No Jew today can have the hope of either the millennium or the New Jerusalem. He cannot accept Christ as his Messiah.* He can accept Him as Savior and also can accept Him as Head of the church which is His body, the church of the dispensation of the mystery.

These facts can be learned only by right division (2Ti 2:15). Getting the facts straight can save you much disappointment some day.

THE OFFENSE OF GRACE

In the time of the apostles there was a man stationed with his group of soldiers at Caesarea in Palestine, who was an Italian and whose soldiers were called the Italian band. This man was called Cornelius. He had come into a knowledge of the Jewish religion and believed in the one God, the God of heaven. Being a believer, his life was changed. He became gentle. He gave to the poor. He went up to the temple at Jerusalem to pray to the true God, Jehovah.

But according to the law of the Jews, he could not come into the blessings and hope of Israel without being circumcised and becoming a Jew. So, tho a saved man with hope of everlasting life, he could have no part in the coming kingdom.

But Peter came to his house one day and used the keys of the kingdom to let Cornelius in without the keeping of the law. So this Gentile, Cornelius took part in the spiritual blessings of Israel by grace, not by keeping the law. The fact that Peter had gone into the house of a Gentile was an offense, even to the Christian Jews. But an even greater offense was the fact that a Gentile could have the same hope and blessings under grace, and not have to keep any of the ordinances and rituals of the law. Read Acts 10-11:18.

We may get the idea that the Christian Jews at Jerusalem were satisfied with the report of Peter and were ready to accept the Gentiles. But that was not exactly the truth. For in Acts 13 Paul began to do the same thing Peter did. He opened the doors of the kingdom to Gentiles and they entered and partook of the blessings of Israel without law or ritual. And everywhere that Paul went, there followed him Judaizers who tried to subvert the new Gentile converts, telling them that they had to be circumcised and keep the law and rituals or they could not be saved. Read Acts 13, 14, 15.

Paul said some strong things about these who opposed his gospel. See Ga 1:6-9.

After the setting aside of the Jew and his hope at Acts 28:28, neither the Jewish or Gentile believers have had to be circumcised, keep the law, or be subject to any ritualism whatsoever. See Col 2.

Almost 19 centuries after this revelation of the dispensation of the mystery by Paul, we still find Christendom so saturated with Judaism that it is still an offense to speak of the believer walking by grace, not law. And these who troubled Paul's converts are still making the rounds telling folks everywhere that they must keep certain Jewish rituals and ordinances or they cannot be saved.

Nearly all man-made churches bar those from membership who would live according to the Bible and its message of grace to the believer today. The grace message is just as much an offense today as it was in the days of Paul. And Christendom today does not recognize the true church which has as its Head Christ, and whose walk is entirely free from law and ritual and whose hope is in heavenly places.

THE WOMAN AT JACOB'S WELL

JOHN 4:3-42

Read this portion over very carefully. Note that the Lord spoke to the woman just 7 times. See how He introduced Himself at the first and how He led her point by point to a belief in in Himself as the Messiah. Here is a good outline for personal work. There are things to do and things not to do in this kind of work.

Since they were at a well and water was such an important thing in the lives of the people of that day, it was a good subject for *breaking the ice*, as we say these days. She was interested at once, especially in a special kind of water which the Lord told about. So the next point is to arouse interest.

Now the next point is a touchy one. She was ready for the water He had to offer, but there was something that had to be faced first. There were some stumbling blocks in her life that needed to be taken care of, or at least her attention must be drawn to them. So He asked her to go bring her husband. That brot out into the light what she needed to face. She did not deny, neither did she confess. That was not needful. The Lord did not tell her to run to the confessional or to go to the altar the next Sunday nite. He did not embarrass her by asking for details or a story of her life. It was done and there was no profit in digging that sort of thing up again. All that was needed was to remind her that she was a sinner. She was not told it in so many words. That would not have been tactful.

We do not know whether she tried to evade the issue by asking about where to worship. It is not likely. She was really interested in the truth of the matter and the place of worship was closely related to the promised Messiah. The fact that she was looking for the Messiah shows that in reality she was a believer as far as she knew. But she was a believer that had been caught in the web of sin, as so many are today.

Note how gentle the Lord is with her all the way thru. But He was also positive and firm about the facts. So she comes to the place that she affirms her faith in a coming Messiah who would teach them all things. Here was the point the Lord had been leading up to. He was able to say that He was the one she was looking for.

We do not know how many beats her heart skipped or how long it took her to get her speech back. At least she said no more till she was back in the city giving testimony that this was indeed the Christ.

I can imagine many today being a bit disappointed at the outcome. Just at the time she was told that this was the promised One, the disciples came up on the scene. It would have been a grand occasion for all to have prayer and the woman seek forgiveness for her sins and when she had come to some great ecstatic feeling, they would have pronounced her *saved!* The Lord never worked that way. Belief was all that was asked of the woman. All other work in connection with the occasion was undertaken by the Lord later at Calvary. There was nothing for her to do but to believe. That is all that is required yet today. Do you believe?

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #9

In our last discussion we took up the reason why that Luke wrote Acts and we found that instead of being a history of the early church, it was a history of events which led up to the setting aside of Israel and their hope of the kingdom followed by the introduction to the dispensation of the mystery. Let us make a brief outline of the book and show that this is true:

A. 1:1-3. INTRODUCTION. CONTINUATION.

B. 1:4-12:23. The Theme; Restoration (1:6, cf. 3:21). To the Jew first in Jerusalem and Judaea. Ministry of the 12 and others. Rejection. Gentiles grafted in at Caesarea. This gospel based on Moses and the prophets (3:18-25).

B. 12:24-28:29. The Theme; The Hope of Israel (28:20, cf. 14:22). To the Jew first outside Jerusalem and Judaea. Ministry of Paul and others. Rejection. Gentiles grafted in at Antioch. This gospel based on Moses and the prophets (28:23, cf. 26:22).

A. 28:30,31. CONCLUSION. BEGINNING.

It is seldom that anybody takes the time to stop and consider why Peter had his vision and went to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea. Few take time to explain why that Gentiles should come into the picture at this place. It is because that Israel had failed to repent at Jerusalem and had gone so far as to kill Stephen. We are told in Romans 10 and 11 the reason for the Gentiles taking part in the hope of Israel.

Now if the church of the dispensation of the mystery began with the inclusion of the Gentiles, as some claim, then that church began in Acts 10 with Peter as the one beginning it. And the fact was recognized in the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) that Peter was first to include the Gentiles in the hope of Israel. That is why that Paul got off so easily. He was accused of taking the Gentiles into the hope of Israel without benefit of circumcision which was against the law. But Peter was able to step in and say that he did it first; and Peter was a SOMEWHAT in Jerusalem in those days.

Note again in the outline that the gospel of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was preached to Jews first in the land by the 12, and that Paul preached the same gospel to the Jew first outside the land. In order to provoke Israel to jealousy and repentance, Peter first grafted in a wild olive branch in the land, and later Paul did the same thing outside the land, except that he grafted in several branches instead of just one.

After the one incident of Peter preaching to the uncircumcision, it was decided at the council that Peter and the rest of the apostles of the circumcision in the land should continue with their gospel of the circumcision. But to Paul and Barnabas and other followers of Paul was given the right to preach the gospel again and again to the uncircumcision wherever and whenever needed. This continued right up to Acts 28:23-29. And right there ceased a gospel based on Moses and the prophets, and a secret unveiled which these never knew.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #29

DENTON C. ABBEY

It might be well if we would spend a little more time on this reference in Revelation. The book itself is so cloaked in mystery and symbolism that few profess to understand it perfectly. However, a few of its doctrines are similar to others in the Bible, so by comparison we can come to some valid conclusions.

These subjects that we have been studying concerning Re 20:15 and 14:11 are fairly basic Christian concepts and should not cause the objections and discussion they do. When Re 16 is read in its entirety, it is apparent that this is a punishment sent on the earth to provoke man to repentance. The bowls of wrath are poured out upon mankind, not by an angry God necessarily, but that by this means these people would turn to God.

God is longsuffering. He is not willing that a great percentage of men should be lost in this final act of judgment. Re 16:10,11 portrays this most vividly. As these 7 different wraths are sent upon unrepentant mankind, they gnaw their tongues rather than repent; blaspheme God before they would bow down to Him.

In a short space of time, from John's point of view, this world is going to come to an end. The devil is going to be loosed to gather together the nations of the earth. This mighty army will come up against the camp of the saints. And then, at this final act of rebellion, God is going to rain fire down from heaven and destroy them (Re 20:9). This is the end of wicked mankind on the earth. Just as the flood destroyed them in the time of Noah, so will fire be the instrument in this day. WHEREBY THE WORLD THAT THEN WAS, BEING OVERFLOWED WITH WATER PERISHED: BUT THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WHICH ARE NOW, BY THE SAME WORD ARE KEPT IN STORE, RESERVED UNTO FIRE AGAINST THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND PERDITION OF UNGODLY MEN (2Pe 3:6,7).

AND THE REST OF THE MEN WHICH WERE NOT KILLED BY THESE PLAGUES, YET REPENTED NOT OF THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS, THAT THEY SHOULD NOT WORSHIP DEVILS, AND IDOLS OF GOLD, AND SILVER, AND BRASS, AND STONE, AND OF WOOD: WHICH NEITHER CAN SEE, NOR HEAR, NOR WALK... (Re 9:20).

This is the scene that sets the stage for Re 14:11. To say the fire and brimstone depict a literal hell is hardly logical.

There is always one factor in this inclusive approach to hell, among certain honest sincere Christians, that bugs me. They never seem to worry that their unceremonious act of dumping folks into hell belies their own doctrine of judging all unbelievers at the great white throne. You just cannot practice *double jeopardy* with immunity.

Just a little clear and unbiased thinking will show that this is not in keeping with the great theme of the Bible. Consistency is the need of the hour. Christ repeatedly told His listeners, I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. WHO-SOEVER BELIEVETH SHALL NEVER PERISH.

BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY (barred from the tree of life). May I ask what further condemnation is needed?

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

43. *Why did Peter go to the house of Cornelius, and why was this the only instance we have of Gentiles being added to the Jewish hope in Judaea?*

First, the reason for Gentiles being added was to provoke Israel to jealousy so that they would bear fruit. This is given in Ro 11 under the figure of the olive tree and the grafting in of a wild olive branch to make it bear fruit. So after the failure of Israel in Jerusalem and Judaea, culminating in the stoning of Stephen, that branch of the olive tree was broken out and Cornelius and his household grafted in. It must have been that Jerusalem and Judaea are all represented by one branch, so there was the one operation then at the house of Cornelius. On the other hand, when Paul added Gentiles, branches in various places were broken out and the wild olive branches (Gentiles) grafted in to take their place. Read Ro 10 & 11.

44. *What will heaven be like? Will those who rule with Christ there sit on thrones? Will there be a city or cities there like there will be in the new earth? What will the believers be doing there?*

I don't know. Since our words are all earthly, they cannot be used to describe heaven. We are left up to faith on these matters a great deal like Abraham was when he was called to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land that God would give him. He was given no details of what it was like or where it was. So we must believe God and go on in faith.

45. *Do you teach that Pauline doctrine is for this age?*

Am glad that I was not asked to say "yes" or "no" in answer to this question. I would have been on the spot. When Paul was preaching to the dispersed Jews of Asia and Europe, he had a gospel no different from that of the 12. His argument was concerning what was written in Moses and the prophets concerning the kingdom. That certainly is not for today, for that kingdom has been postponed for the time being. What Paul taught the Gentile converts during Acts was also the same good news with the addition that Gentiles could partake of the spiritual blessings of Israel by grace, that is, they were not obliged to keep the law and observe the rituals. No Gentiles are partaking of the blessings of Israel today, therefore this gospel is one that is past. Also during the Acts ministry there were a few occasions where Paul was speaking to raw heathen, not to Gentile believers. To those he preached something akin to the everlasting gospel preached by the angel in Re 14: 6,7. I can find no place for that today. But when Paul began to preach the gospel of the dispensation of the mystery after Acts 28:28, I find something I can proclaim for this age. So you see the general statement concerning Pauline doctrine might cover as many as 4 different gospels. But surely not all these are to be preached today. Yes, I proclaim Pauline doctrine, that which was hid from ages and generations in God and not revealed till the kingdom re-offer had been completed.

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