

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #101

5:5

FOR THIS YE KNOW, THAT NO WHOREMONGER, NOR UNCLEAN PERSON, NOR COVETOUS MAN, WHO IS AN IDOLATOR, HATH ANY INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF GOD.

These words are still for believers, members of the church of the dispensation of the mystery which is the body of Christ. Let no man try to use his pitchfork and toss these words over into the yard of the unbeliever. It is better to use a rake and take them to one's self.

The fornicators, the unclean, the avaricious, can be found in the church, do not mistake that. There is a warning about these folks in Ph'p 3: 18, 19. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. They make the meaning of the cross foolishness. The end will be a destruction of their works, as in 1Co 3. They will receive no prize or crown.

In Eph 1:11 we have an inheritance that cannot be forfeited. Our place in the body cannot be lost. But the reward of the inheritance can be lost (Col 3:24). We can be cheated of our crown. We can miss the prize. Salvation can never be lost. That is certain and sure and our life is hid with Christ in God. Our calling and election cannot be changed. But one can suffer loss without being lost. This is a solemn warning. It is no light thing for a believer to fall into the hands of an angry God. Think about the man who hid his talent. He was called wicked and slothful, but yet a servant of his master.

God cannot overlook sin and pass it by as nothing. It must be accounted for. Sure, and God has told us that Christ died for our sins, past, present and future. But when one has accepted that fact and made a profession, then wilful sin is presumption and making light of the shed blood. Christ cannot be crucified again for such sins. And to persist in them is to trample under foot the blood of Christ. Is it surprising that God will be angry?

It does not say in this verse that such cannot enter into the kingdom. That is not the question. But it is a question of inheritance in that kingdom. We must not shut our eyes to the awful possibilities for evil in each of us. We need not rake over all this again which is not to be mentioned among such as are Christ's.

There is a parallel that in 1Co 5:11-13. There the believer is not to keep company with and eat with another who is called a brother if that one is like what is described here in Eph 5:5. We are in this world and we have to have contacts with such who are not believers, but when we consort with believers who do such things, we can be judged by the world as being the same. So we should be very careful of the company we keep and not even let it seem that we are partakers of their evil ways.

These facts should be stressed by parents to their children. The young folks should be warned about these things. Not only is there danger in being classed the same as their associates, but there is danger that they be enticed to do the same things. As said before, we must be very careful since the heart is very deceitful and we cannot trust ourselves in all situations. Let no one rob you of your inheritance.

SATAN'S MISTAKE

When Lucifer, who later became Satan, was created, he was the wisest and most beautiful of creatures. But in pride and revolt, he is sinking lower and lower. He is out of contact with God, the Giver of wisdom. So since the coming of man on the earth scene Satan has done some very foolish things. Creatures who have wisdom from God are learning to shun this being who has brot ruin and death into God's universe.

But the question that comes to mind is just this. When Satan crept into Eden and tempted mankind, did he know what he was doing? Did he have any idea of the final outcome? These are questions that come to mind as we ponder those happenings.

In the first place, man was given dominion in this earth. Satan would naturally consider that a challenge to his authority. For he had been set up as a covering cherub. He was to guard and rule, but failed. It would be natural then that he would want to remove in some way this man and take away his authority.

It would be natural for this wicked creature to think that if he could cause this man and woman to sin, that there could be no remedy or restoration. He did not know how that God could overrule such a situation and remain righteous and just. That God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly was still a secret. So Satan felt perfectly safe and secure as he went about ruining our parents in Eden.

But after the deed was done he learned to his sorrow some important facts. He learned that his own destruction would eventually come thru the agency of the seed of woman, and this in spite of the fact that he had caused her to sin and fall. And he also learned that there was a Lamb slain from the overthrow of the world who would make it possible that Adam and his progeny could be restored and made righteous. He learned that altho man died as the result of sin, that God would come to earth in flesh and taste of death for all men so that all men might have a resurrection, a new creation.

Now if Satan had known of these as even possibilities, it is quite likely that he would have stayed away from Eden and man as far as possible. At least that would have been the wise thing to do. But he did not know.

Satan has exerted himself to the utmost in his attempts to ruin the human race and to stop the way of salvation. But it has all been in vain and his works have been overruled and made to work right in with God's plan and purpose for creation. No doubt this has made Satan quite angry and his last acts on the earth scene will be terrible for he then will know that his time is short. But in the meantime what does he do?

From Eden till now it has been Satan's desire to rule this earth with a rule that would counterfeit God's perfect rule. He would have decency and order. He would have peace. He would have prosperity. But all is failure. He cannot give man wisdom so that he will work with this plan. So Satan's failure is greatly on account of human nature. Now think that over for a while. What is God's way? How will He succeed?

WHAT IS SALVATION?

Man has his ideas of what salvation is, what he is saved from and what he is saved to. The Word reveals what God has to say about salvation, what from and what to. Somehow, the two lines of that are not parallel. Man and God do not seem to agree on these matters.

Man has set up what he thinks is the penalty for sin, and then expects God to save him from it. God has revealed that man is in bondage to sin and that there is a way provided by which man can be released from or saved from that bondage. But man will not have it that way. He likes the bondage and would not have that part changed, but he wants to be saved from what he thinks is the penalty for sin. And so instead of the ideas of man and God being parallel, they cross. The result is that man spurns God's salvation and invents one of his own.

We do not have to look far these days to see the evidence of what we have just said. Man has made a church in imitation of God's church. This man-made church is a sort of fire insurance company or organization. He imagines that if anyone joins his church then that person is safe from the penalty of sin. In a large measure this church has taken the place of Christ and is the mediator between man and God. So it is by the church that man thinks he can approach God.

Now the bondage of sin is not just confined to its dominion over him in life, but the prison house of death is also a part of the bondage. So salvation is not only release or redemption from bondage in this life, but is also a release or resurrection from the prison house of death. Salvation is not complete without resurrection. Some kindhearted men have been repulsed by the invention they have made of the penalty for sin, and still under the sway of the lie of Satan concerning immortality, they have made a new plan to escape the penalty of sin. They claim that all men will be resurrected or saved. This is known as universal salvation. But it is only Christ's church, the saved ones, that the gates of hell or the grave (the prison house) will not be able to hold.

Man's idea of salvation also includes works in some form or other. There is always something to do to be saved. Whereas God's plan has always from the beginning been a salvation by grace. There has never been any other way. The blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world was just as efficacious in prospect for Adam as it is in retrospect for you and me today. God's plan and way of salvation has never changed. And we might add that sin has never changed either. There are no dispensational aspects to these fundamental facts.

Man vainly dreams that he can make this flesh, the old nature, fit for the presence of God, and that by doing good he can attain unto salvation. But this old nature is not in the realm of spirit and never can be. If one does not have the new nature, the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Now the question you have to face is this. Are you saved according to God's plan, or are you trying to do the impossible for yourself?

THE PENALTY FOR SIN

In the former article we spoke of salvation being from the bondage of sin rather than the penalty. Now our next question is what is the penalty of sin, if any? Is death the penalty for sin? Or is suffering the penalty for sin?

Adam had to suffer for sin in that he saw death in his family and had to work hard for his living. Now was that the penalty, or was it his death after 930 years?

Was the penalty for Eli's sin his getting his neck broken, or was it that he saw the ark of the covenant taken by the Philistines and his sons lost in battle?

How did David have to suffer for his sin? Was it by death, or was it that he saw strife and bloodshed in his family before he died?

How about Moses? Did he die for his sin, or was his penalty his inability to enter the promised land?

How about the Israelites who would not enter at Kadesh Barnea? Was their death in the wilderness or their being barred from the land the penalty for their sin?

We can ask about many more characters we read of in the Bible and wonder just what is the penalty for sin. We hear about the reign of death in Romans. We also hear about the law of sin. It speaks of sin being brot into the world by one man and death by sin.

So we can see that man is not saved from the suffering for sin. But a lot of people think that they should be. In fact, that is the common idea of salvation.

Now somebody is going to ask this question. How about folks who suffer for the sin of somebody else. Well, it is this way. We are all sowing, that is I mean believers. And as believers we reap what we sow. But there are times when some of the seed flies over the fence into the neighbor's field and so he reaps something I sowed. And the reverse is true. So we can conclude that all suffering is not because of the sins of the sufferer. We are in a sinful world and we cannot help getting involved in it to some extent.

But back to this sowing and reaping thing. You cannot sow a lot of wild oats and then hope to miss the harvest. David was forgiven. Moses was a man that talked with God face to face. And others we may mention were well spoken of, but they had to finish their harvest. No wonder we are told not to kid ourselves about these things, that God is not fooled, and that we must reap what we sow.

And that is why that believers must face the judge to receive the things done in the flesh. The harvest may extend a long way. As for the unbeliever, he is already condemned and so there is no need for any final judgment for him. While he lives he is ruled by sin and when he dies he becomes a prisoner of death with no release in view. There is no promise of one.

These thots are merely suggestive and to make you think on these things. We are not propounding any new doctrine, but mention these things so you may pursue the thots and come up with your own answers.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #10

It might be well to consider the relative positions of Jew and Gentile in the churches of the Acts period and compare and contrast them with what obtained after Acts 28:28.

Paul asks the question in Ro 3:1, WHAT ADVANTAGE THEN HATH THE JEW? OR WHAT PROFIT IS THERE OF CIRCUMCISION? He answers the question in the next verse. They had advantage in every way, but the chief advantage was that to them were committed the oracles (Word) of God. Again he mentions certain advantages in Ro 9:4,5. To the Jew pertained the adoption (placing as firstborn), the glory, the covenants, giving of the law (oracles), the service of God (in temple, synagogue, church or anywhere the Word was proclaimed), the promises, the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, see 1Co 10:1), and to the Jew, as far as the flesh was concerned, Christ came to them and to none else (M't 15:24).

Since the oracles of God were committed to the Jew, it was the Jew only that could read and expound the Scriptures in public. No doubt there are readers who can remember back when in many churches the order of the Jewish synagogue was followed to some extent. The women, girls and children would go in and sit in the right row of pews forward. The men and boys would take the left side. And the strangers coming in would sit in the rear. So in the synagogue the women sat separate and the Gentiles in another separate place. Neither the women nor the Gentiles were permitted to speak in these meetings. Yet you see how that this order persisted down thru the centuries even tho abolished after Acts 28:28.

Now we have been discussing dispensational aspects of the matter. There is another side to it also. When Gentiles were grafted in and partook of the blessings of Israel and were counted as in Christ, then the apostle Paul declares in Ga 3:28, THERE (in that place, in Christ) IS NEITHER JEW NOW GREEK. THERE IS NEITHER BOND NOR FREE. THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE: FOR YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. Some take hold of this verse and try to fit it into the doctrinal teaching of Eph 1:3. At no time did Paul ever try to set the slaves free and make them equal with their masters in this world. Neither did he try to unsex the women and have them wearing men's apparel and taking the place of men in society. So let us leave these verses in their place and mean what the apostle intended rather than trying to force them to prove a difficult point.

From the time that Peter grafted Gentiles into the olive tree at Caesarea, making the Gentiles partakers of Israel's spiritual things (Ro 15:27), there was strife in the assemblies. The Jewish Christians resented the favor shown the Gentiles whereby they shared in their blessings without having to observe the law. Peter had to stand before the church in Jerusalem because of it. The council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 was called for the same reason.

The Jew never lost his advantages nor his identity during Acts. Look and see.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #30

DENTON C. ABBEY

Again we take up one of the verses that we listed in article No. 15, WHO SHALL BE PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. AND THE GLORY OF HIS POWER. This is interpreted by many people to mean that these will be punished by being expelled from the presence of the Lord, to a punishment in hell. Granted it may, appear so. The lexicon reveals that the Gr. word is *prosopon* and is used 75 times in the NT. It is translated 58 times as *face*; 7 as *persons*; 7 as *presence*; 3 as *countenance*; 2 as *appearing*; 2 as *before*; and 1 as *fashion*. You will note that with one or two exceptions these are very much alike and could be in most cases be substituted. However, at the same time some of these appear as *verbal nouns*, giving a sense of activity as well as a substantive sense. So we are faced with the question of which of the two meanings to use.

Fashion, before, appearance, and presence are included in this group. And *presence* is the one that demands our attention here. It is a question of whether these souls in question are expelled from His presence or by His presence. Then we must ask ourselves what does the phrase EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION represent?

In Ac 3:19 we have a similar verse, viz., REPENT THEREFORE. AND BE CONVERTED. THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT WHEN THE TIMES OF REFRESHING SHALL COME FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. So in Ac 3:19 and 2Th 1:9 we have one phrase that is identical, FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. Now in Acts it signifies that the refreshing will come from the Lord by or thru His *appearing*. However, in 2Th, we are asked to believe that the same phrase means we will not be punished by or thru His appearing, but that we will be banished from His proximity. Here we find our verbal noun denoting action as well as being. And this seems reasonable, for the last part of our verse in question reads, AND THE GLORY OF HIS POWER.

In fact, without doing any injustice to the Scriptures, this verse in 2Th might be altered to read thusly and still parallel the Greek; *Who shall suffer the penalty, when everlasting destruction comes from the presence (or face) of the Lord, and the glory of His strength.* You will note that the next line, 2Th 1:10 reads, WHEN HE SHALL COME.

Our understanding is helped if we go back to verse 8, IN FLAMING FIRE, TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD. AND THAT OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Or turn to 2:8, AND THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED WHOM THE LORD SHALL CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH AND SHALL DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING. This is in keeping with Re 19:15, AND OUT OF HIS MOUTH GOETH A SHARP SWORD. THAT WITH IT HE SHOULD SMITE THE NATIONS.

So once again we meet with our rule which we dare not ignore. Our interpretation must be counselled by, WHAT SAYETH THE SCRIPTURE? This must take into consideration, not only the context, but must be in harmony and in keeping with the doctrines of the Bible. But we will have some more on this in next issue.

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

46. *Did the Lord come to earth to set up a new dispensation?*

No. There is a perfect continuity between the OT prophecies and the synoptic gospels. His ministry was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, or, as Paul puts it, JESUS CHRIST WAS A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD. TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES MADE UNTO THE FATHERS. So instead of starting something new, He was here to fulfill the old.

47. *Do believers of the dispensation of the mystery go to heaven when they die?*

No. It is evident that believers of the kingdom dispensation have not been resurrected and come on the earth scene, for they are not here. We have seen none of them. The reason for this is just this; the earth is not yet prepared for their resurrection and dwelling here. It is for the same reason that none is being resurrected and going to heaven now. Satan and his angels are there. The place has not been prepared yet. But some day (Re 12) Satan and his angels will be cast out. Then will that place be ready for a resurrection of the believers of the dispensation of the mystery and their enjoyment of the blessings that are theirs in that realm.

48. *What do you think of the idea that David's throne is in heaven?*

I don't think much of it. Of course what you or I think does not make it the truth. Jacob spoke a word of prophecy when he said that the sceptre should not depart from Judah. Now in Daniel 2 this rule is represented by the little stone, and in verse 35, when it has demolished the kingdoms of the earth, then it will fill the whole earth. That is not heaven. This is just one of scores of such illustrations that may be brot forward to show that the Millennial kingdom is an earth kingdom. It is the burden of prophecy. It is most closely related to the nations of the earth and their future redemption.

49. *If men are saved by grace since Christ, how were they saved before?*

This is a very good question. We have in nearly all the world today, churches which have added the term grace to their titles. When you hear folks talk who belong to these organizations, you would think that they alone are saved by grace and that all others were saved by some other means. This can be very misleading. The truth of the matter is that when we consider the nature of man and sin, it is not hard to see that if there ever was salvation in any age, it was by grace. Man, in the flesh, is powerless to do one single thing that would give him merit in the sight of God. So it is foolish to talk about man doing something to merit salvation. We can go way back almost 2,000 years before Christ for an example. There was Abraham who believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Paul brings up this example before the Romans in his epistle to them, showing that Abraham was justified by faith as a Gentile and uncircumcised. Adam, Abel, Seth, and all the rest of the OT saints were saved by grace thru faith, and there is no other way.

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