

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #102

5:6,7

LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU WITH VAIN WORDS: FOR BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS COMETH THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE. BE NOT YE THEREFORE PARTAKERS WITH THEM.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. He may try to tell you that God's grace is so extensive that He will overlook the sins mentioned in verse 5; that they do not really matter. But the deceiver may have a purpose. He may be trying to beguile you of your reward. In fact, that is the reason given in Col 2:18. But in verse 8 we have the same warning as here in Ephesians. It says, BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH...VAIN DECEIT.

If you will weigh the words of the tempter in Ge 3 you will find that they are only empty deceit. They had no authority back of them, not even vain tradition. In Daniel we read of one who will take a kingdom by flatteries, which are nothing but empty words.

Examine the words of the tempter of our Lord when He was in the wilderness. They are only empty words. But the wiles of the devil so often appeal to human wisdom and reasoning. He is very adept at getting one to think more of himself than he ought to think. When man is turned in that direction, then he can rationalize and make himself believe that anything is right for him.

Now it is because of the things listed in verse 5 that the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience, or, the sons of this disobedience. We have a similar catalog in Col 3:5 and then in verse 6 we read, FOR WHICH THINGS' SAKE THE WRATH OF GOD COMETH ON THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE.

Being in the world and in constant contact with its filth, we need constant reminders of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We need to look at it from God's viewpoint. We need to know something of His holiness so that we can see sin in its true light. Every saint needs these warnings.

We are not going to try to determine the extent and nature of the wrath of God. It may be poured out in so many ways. No doubt, just letting one reap what he sows would be one way of letting His wrath work. When the nations once knew God, but did not like to retain Him in their knowledge, neither were thankful, He simply gave them up to their vile ways and gave them over to a reprobate mind. Any student of history can recognize that in this the nations have suffered and walked in darkness. But they chose that way and God has let them go in it. The suffering has been terrible.

In view of all this, we are not to become sharers along with them. For if we share in the sins, then we must share in the sufferings, the wrath of God. Lot went down to Sodom and he lost everything. But because he was a believer he did not lose his life. The Word of God tells us the unvarnished truth about men and their failures. You can pick example after example of those who partook of the things of the world and had to suffer for it. All these are written for our learning.

THINGS ABOVE

SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE...SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE. COL 3:1,2

This exhortation is for the member of the church of the dispensation of the mystery. It is not for those who are looking for the kingdom of heaven, for it is to be on the earth, not above. It is not for the nations of them that are saved and found on the new earth, paradise. It is only for those who are blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Such an exhortation cannot be for one who day after day repeats the so-called Lord's prayer. For such an one is looking for an earthly kingdom, not things above. It is not for one who expects the so-called rapture, for that is for those who look for the King. Those who look for the Head look for a resurrection in the heavenly places so as to be manifested there.

This place which is described as *above*, is defined as being at the right hand of God. So where God is, that is where *above* is. It is also where Christ is, and for any member of the body, this is of supreme importance. Each member should look to the Head.

Not only are members of the body to seek those things which are above, but also to set their affection there. That is more than just giving it a passing thought. And this is in contrast to things on the earth. Such exhortation could never have been given to the nation of Israel, for thru Abraham they had a promise of the land and thru the unconditional promise given to David, they have promise of a King of the line of David to rule here on the earth.

The hard thing to understand is that one has to die in order to get a new life. Now that would not be so bad if it just simply meant resurrection after this life is finished and we enter into a new one. But there is a present tense to be observed. In verse 20 of the previous chapter it speaks of being dead with Christ. Then verse one of this chapter speaks of being risen with Christ. Verse 3 again says something about having died, but there is a new life hid with Christ in God. That is a present possession. The believer of the dispensation of the mystery is reckoned as being dead, buried, risen, quickened, raised, and seated with Christ far above all. Then verse 4 mentions a 7th item for which these members look. It is in the future. It is to be manifested with Him in glory.

Man, with all his provisions, if's, and uncertainties, finds it hard to believe that these things may be so sure for one in the high calling that they are spoken of as being accomplished already. What a comfort we have in these words!

Those who are given this exhortation are not likely to be found spending their time in social, government, and economic reforms. In fact, when we come to think of it, the apostle Paul was not engaged in such things at any time. It is also noteworthy that our Lord, when on the earth, did not try to reform society or break the Roman rule, except that He did cleanse the temple, His Father's house.

Col 3:1-4 is a great help in times of sorrow and trouble. Memorize these verses.

STRANGE HAPPENINGS

About A.D. 46 rumors began sifting back to Jerusalem from Asia Minor about the activities of a certain Jewish evangelist called Paul. For close to 1500 years the Jews had the law and the rituals, all of which pointed to the coming Messiah. Three times a year they were to go up to Jerusalem for feasts. All these were to make sure the promises made to the fathers. The Messiah had come, was ignorantly rejected and crucified by His own people. Now the 12 apostles had been preaching that thru this man Jesus only could they have remission of sins and have the confirmation of the promises. Paul had gone outside the land and proclaimed the same message. But he added something. When the Jews did not believe and would have none of his gospel, he turned to the Gentile believers and admitted them into fellowship and upon them came the Holy Ghost as it did on the Jews at Pentecost.

So the rumors came back thick and fast that this Paul was letting Gentiles into the kingdom, into the blessings and hope of Israel without due process of law. And that law was that they should be circumcised and keep the law, even all the rituals.

There was so much dissension about this problem that finally a council was called in Jerusalem. Paul did not have much chance to answer for himself till Peter stood up and told how that he was the first to do the same thing in the land of Judaea, even at Caesarea.

So a decision was made and the Gentiles were not obligated to the law, but they were to be subject to 4 ordinances so as to keep peace where Jew and Gentile met together.

In the years that followed the assemblies got more or less reconciled to this arrangement, altho the Judaizers were always at work trying to tear down the teaching of Paul.

At last Paul was nearly mobbed in Jerusalem and falsely charged with teaching that the Jews did not need circumcision, nor the law, nor to come up to Jerusalem for the yearly feasts. For this he went to Rome to appeal to Caesar. He was innocent of the charge, for he did not preach the gospel of grace to the Jews, but to Gentile believers only.

Altho it was a strange thing to the Jews that one could share in all the spiritual blessings that were theirs dispensationally without having to keep the law, not even the Passover or their baptisms, or their holy days, or anything of the kind, yet how shocked they may have been about A.D. 60 or 62 when Paul preached that none of these things was any longer required of either Jew or Gentile. And this is exactly what Paul proclaimed from a Roman prison.

And today, nearly 2000 years later, there are few who can tolerate such a gospel. The Judaizers still would require the keeping of the Passover and Jewish baptisms or washings for Christian converts. They still think that there should be a priesthood of some kind and a ritual in some stated place of worship or temple.

That man should worship God in spirit and in truth is generally unacceptable yet today.

I DON'T HAVE TIME!

How often have you heard folks say they would like to read and study the Bible, and then end by saying, "I don't have time"?

You can know very well what they really mean when they say this. They mean that they feel that they ought to read and study the Bible, but they do not want to. That is it in a nutshell.

Just how many do you hear complain that they do not have time for TV or the radio? How many complain that they do not have time to read the newspaper, especially the Sunday edition?

The fact is, people find time to do what they want to do. They manage somehow. They can always adjust their duties and chores so that extras can be worked in. But somehow, they never manage to get the time to read and study the Bible. So we can know that when they say they do not have time, they are only trying to excuse themselves.

A Roman governor by the name of Felix one day was talking with the great writer and evangelist, Paul, but instead of taking the great opportunity of believing what Paul had to say, he put it off till a more convenient time. There is no record that Felix ever did have time to consider his salvation. But he had plenty of time for other things.

Once this same Paul had a helper by the name of Demas. But it seems that Demas had other things to do and so did not have time to continue with the work. Paul gave the reason. It was because Demas loved this present world. And that is just the reason that you and I do not read and study the Bible as we ought.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time for every purpose under the heaven. He enumerates a whole list of things. He could have added to that list that there is a time to study God's Word.

Then there are those who put in some time but do not get much study accomplished. They do not find the Word interesting. It is because they have not dug deep enough to find the treasures. Moreover, a superficial glance at it will result in erroneous ideas. Let us look at an example of this.

When Mary Magdalene went out to the garden the first of the Sabbaths, she saw that the stone had been rolled away. Now Mary was much interested or she would not have come to the garden. She loved the Lord. She missed Him. And so she took the time to go look at the sepulchre. But as soon as she saw the stone rolled away, she did not investigate farther. She came to a conclusion, and that was that the body had been taken away.

John came and looked in, but did not enter. He might have come to the same conclusion. Peter entered and looked about. He saw the clothes in order, but did not seem to put two and two together. He did not comprehend yet what had happened. Then John entered and saw the same orderly arrangement of the clothes and he came to a conclusion. He believed that there had been a resurrection, even tho he did not have Scripture to that effect as yet. He took time to think the matter over.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #11

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #31

DENTON C. ABBEY

MEN OF ISRAEL. HELP: THIS IS THE MAN, THAT TEACHETH ALL MEN EVERY WHERE AGAINST THE PEOPLE, AND THE LAW, AND THIS PLACE (temple).

These were the words of a mob of Jews in Jerusalem who seized Paul in the temple. It was a false accusation, a lie. Paul did not speak against his kinsmen, the Jews. See Ro 9:3. He never spoke against the law, but said that it was holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good (Ro 7:12). He had not spoken against the temple, but had made great plans to go to the temple on this trip for Pentecost and was at the time of his arrest finishing a vow which took him to the temple.

It is true that Paul taught that Gentiles need not observe the law, that they did not have to become Jews, nor were they obligated to go to the temple to worship. All that was because they were under grace, not the law. To this had agreed the council at Jerusalem (Ac 15).

This same false accusation is being made against Paul yet today. There are many who say that he did not proclaim the re-offer of the kingdom as did the 12. But that was the heart of his ministry and wherever the Jews rejected this gospel of the kingdom, then they were broken out as a branch and a group of Gentiles grafted in as a wild olive shoot.

Just as Peter and the 11 proclaimed the kingdom in the land to Jews first, even so Paul proclaimed it to Jews first outside the land.

You will note from the chart of NT chronology in study #8 that the great kingdom gospel of Matthew was written about 4 years after Paul's conversion. Then came Mark, James, and Jude. Certainly all these were looking for the return of the King whom the heavens must retain till the times of the restitution of all things. And Paul looked for the coming King too (1Co 15 and 1Th 4).

Twelve is the number of governmental perfection. It is to be noted that there could be no proclamation of the kingdom in Acts till the number of the apostles was restored to 12. Paul recognized and spoke of the 12. He also spoke of the 12 tribes as then existing. James did likewise. And, as we have said repeatedly before, at the council in Jerusalem (Ac 15) Paul was never accused of preaching a different gospel to Jews than did the 12. That was not the question at all. He was faulted because he was letting Gentiles into the kingdom without circumcision and law observance. He was acquitted of the charge mainly because that Peter had done the same thing after he had a revelation from heaven (Ac 10).

Now if Paul were preaching a different gospel from what the 12 proclaimed, then his words in Ga 1:8 would certainly be a very harsh condemnation of the 12 and especially of Peter.

The truth is that Paul preached the same gospel as the 12, but he preached it to Gentiles as Gentiles and to Jews as Jews. And that was what offended the Jews and finally made them get angry with him and make the false charge we quoted above. So let us be careful that we do not do as these Jews did.

It may appear that we are straining at a gnat while swallowing a camel on this interpretation of the word *presence*. However, much depends on the meaning given it. If we are to accept the meaning as *banishment from His presence*, then the *everlasting destruction* means that and nothing more. In other words, the punishment is banishment. If this is unacceptable, then the punishment is *everlasting destruction*, and it makes little difference whether it is in His presence or not. It is hardly necessary, if we accept the orthodox viewpoint, to use a double invective to prove the point. Our terminology gets quite bifarious when we say, "I killed him dead." And this is exactly what we find being done in this verse. The punishment--everlasting destruction, banishment; once condemned but twice destroyed.

So again we see, if we follow the usual method of interpretation, we run into all sorts of ambiguities and contradictions. However, if we let the Bible do its own interpreting, the problem solves itself. The punishment is everlasting destruction; the method is simply the power or presence of the Lord. This, as I stated in last month's article, is seen from other related verses dealing with this same problem.

The word *destruction* in this verse is the Greek *olethros*. It is used 4 times; 1Co 5:5, FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH. 1Th 5:3, WHEN DESTRUCTION COMES. 2Th 1:9, WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION, and 1Ti 6:9, WHICH DROWN MEN IN DESTRUCTION.

The Greek dictionary gives the meaning of *olethros* as, *destruction; ruin or undoing*.

There is no hint, either in the use of the word *olethros* in Scripture or the dictionary, to signify that this destruction is *separation*. The only possible intimation of such a condition is derived from the phrase, *FROM THE PRESENCE*. That is like the first sentence of this article; straining at a gnat. If I were to say, *from the house*, or *from the multitude*, your first reaction would be to expect something from that source; not that you would flee from it. However, when it comes to Bible interpretation, it seems one must always solve the problem to conform with the contemporary idea most prevalent.

In Ac 5:41 we have the word *presence* used, AND THEY DEPARTED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL. Here without a doubt we have the meaning, *to be separated*; just as in Ac 3:19 we had the very opposite.

The Greek interlinear NT renders 2Th 1:9 as follows, *Who shall suffer the penalty (of) everlasting destruction from (the) presence of the Lord*. This is not so clear, and the only way to make a final and sure interpretation is by the method we so often advocate. How is the word used? Does it correspond with other Scripture on the same subject? Does it conflict with any other verse teaching concerning the same doctrine?

Let us not be too hasty in our conclusions. Let us work in the Berean spirit, searching to find what is the truth, not merely to confirm our own suspicions. May it glorify the Lord.

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

50. *Was the eunuch to whom Philip preached a native of Ethiopia?*

It is very unlikely that he was an Ethiopian. It is very possible that he was a Jew that was a slave or servant as was Daniel. Like Daniel, he had a high position in the government. He had the Scriptures (our OT) which would be unlikely for a Gentile. He came to Jerusalem to worship as did the Jews. It is also to be noted that he believed and was baptized before Peter had opened the doors of the kingdom to Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. This is a very conclusive piece of evidence that this man was a Jew and not a Gentile.

51. *Is Luke 16:19-31 a parable?*

What saith the Scriptures? Read M't 13:34 and Lu 8:10.

52. *If the church of the dispensation of the mystery began some time during the Acts period, and not at the end, then what was Paul doing with those Jewish leaders in Ac 28:17-29?*

A very good question. I would like to know too!

53. *Who was the young man who escaped naked that night in Gethsemane?*

We have no way of knowing with certainty, as the Scriptures do not say. Some think it was John Mark. Some weight may be had for this since he is the only one of the gospel writers who mentions it. On the other hand there is good reason for believing that it was Lazarus of Bethany. He also had been marked out by the chief priests for death (John 12:10,11). So that night they were looking for Lazarus as well as the Lord. No doubt he had heard rumors and was concerned about the safety of the Lord and so came to the garden to see. It may be that he was not named in the gospel record because there might still be some danger to him if this were known.

54. *Where is Satan?*

He has his seat of authority in heaven. He will be cast out in the middle of the 70th week that is determined upon the people and the holy city (Da 9; Re 12). He will be cast into the earth and his seat of authority there will be in Pergamos, Asia Minor (Re 2:13). At present he also can roam up and down the earth at will (Job 1:7).

55. *Is it true that Job prayed that he might go to hell?*

Yes. In Job 14:13 he says, O THAT THOU WOULDST HIDE ME IN THE GRAVE (sheol or hell), THAT THOU WOULDST KEEP ME SECRET, UNTIL THY WRATH BE PAST. Not many folks would ever think of praying to be hid in hell so that they could escape the wrath of God. But here it is. Make the most of it! Furthermore, Job was confident that God would call and he would answer.

56. *Were the Saul of the OT and the Saul of the NT related?*

They may have been, for both were of the tribe of Benjamin. But there is a great contrast in their characters. The one was a dismal failure; the other an outstanding success of all time. Truly Saul of Tarsus made up a little for the shame Saul of Gibeah brot on the tribe.

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