

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #115

6:5-8

SERVANTS, BE OBEDIENT TO THEM THAT ARE YOUR MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING, IN SINGleness OF YOUR HEART, AS UNTO CHRIST; NOT WITH EYESERVICE, AS MENPLEASERS; BUT AS THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST, DOING THE WILL OF GOD FROM THE HEART; WITH GOOD WILL DOING SERVICE, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT TO MEN: KNOWING THAT WHATSOEVER GOOD THING ANY MAN DOETH, THE SAME SHALL HE RECEIVE OF THE LORD, WHETHER HE BE BOND OR FREE.

This is to and for servants. That will include all of us in some way or other. We either have labor or goods to sell. Even the merchant is a servant of the public. So there is instruction here for most of us.

When Joseph was in the house of Potiphar, and in the prison, he was very careful with what was entrusted to him, being faithful in all things. And when he was made the prime minister of Egypt, he was still faithful to his trust.

Jacob worked hard for Laban, making Laban rich, as well as himself.

Daniel was a slave and an eunuch in Babylon, but was faithful in everything he was to do. He was a man that could be trusted.

There are many more examples from the Word that you may think of. Paul sends a slave back to his master. And we see in all this that neither our Lord nor any of the apostles tried to reform the society in which they found themselves. The slavery and Roman rule were accepted as such. There was no insurrection on the part of any of the believers. They were to preach the gospel, not to change the customs and laws of the times. You cannot change people by simply making some laws. That has always been true. The change must start from within.

Read the story of David and his persecutions. At no time did he ever lift his hand against the king, God's anointed. He had plenty of provocation from Saul, but not once did David take any advantage. Now if one does have a right to vote and to make his voice heard in the society in which he lives, then that is his duty and he should contribute something if he gains any benefits from that society. Even in the olden times when a party of travelers was stopped for the night, one or two would guard during the time the rest slept. So do not ask a police guard unless you are willing to take your turn being a policeman. You can develop this theme for yourself. But the principle is that we render unto Caesar and unto God what is due. We are not to be parasites.

And we must apologize for mentioning it, but good old fashioned *honesty* is very needful in these relationships we have with others. This may be scarce today, but it is a fine Christian virtue and should be put into practice. There is such a thing as Christian economics. We do not have to cheat our fellow men in order to make a living for ourselves. But this is not a popular idea today.

It does a lot of good to just imagine that we are working for the Lord, and not just for a man in our jobs. But it is more than just imagination; it is true, and He rewards.

THE INNER CIRCLE

When our Lord walked on this earth, He had at least 120 disciples. These He taught on various occasions. But out of this group was an inner circle of 70 which was taught and sent on a special mission. And out of this 70 was another inner circle of 12 who were not only disciples, but apostles. They were given a special work and also given a special commission which is yet to be worked out in the great millennial kingdom.

But out of this 12 was another little inner circle of 3; Peter, James, and John. They were just a little nearer to the Lord and they received some special revelation that the rest did not get. That was the transfiguration.

Now why should there be any inner circles? Why should some receive favors that the rest did not? In the first place we know that this situation was brot about by the choice of the Lord. But that is not all the answer. We want to know why He chose them and not others.

The bond that brot some closer than others and which was the occasion of the choosing was *love*. They loved the Lord just a little more than did the rest. Let us not blame the rest for their lack of love. They may not be at fault at all. Some people just have the capacity to love more than others do. It may be no choice of their own to a great extent. But we can see that Peter, James, and John were closer and seemed to love the Lord more than the others. So they obtained special favors.

And while speaking of these circles, we must not forget that there were some others who were very close to the Lord also. Take for instance, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Remember how Mary loved to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to Him teach. And Martha tried to express her love in doing things for the Lord.

And there is another that we must not forget, and that was Mary Magdalene. She loved much because she had been forgiven much.

These also remind us of some others who were favored by the Lord before He came to earth in flesh. There was Enoch who walked with Him. There was Abraham who could be called the friend of God. There was David who was a man after God's heart. So our Lord had walked and talked with these too. They had been in an inner circle. We could mention others.

And then we may wonder who are walking in that inner circle today. Are there some favored ones to whom He speaks and reveals secrets? There was Paul to whom was revealed the greatest of all secrets known so far. And that secret was to be committed to those who were apt to teach so that it might be transmitted down thru the centuries.

Those who are in on this secret (and that is by choice of Him), have an opportunity of being very close these days. For there is a special assembly or church of the dispensation of the mystery which is hid with Christ in God, seated with Him at the right hand of God. Potentially they can be no nearer. But those who love Him most experience a fellowship and closeness that many miss. But love is the key to it.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD #9

LACK OF FAITH

FRED RALPH

It was in the will and purpose of God that Israel should be delivered from the bondage of Egypt. In fact, it was promised to Abraham 430 years before it was accomplished. He was told that his seed should possess the land that was promised to him, but which he never owned. He was told that his seed should be servants in a strange land and would be delivered and re-enter the land in the fourth generation.

Not only was it in God's purpose, but we are assured that God had the power to do it. He could have taken them up in a whirlwind and set them in the land in a matter of minutes. But God does not work that way unless it is absolutely necessary. He lets man make decisions for himself. He lets man choose what he will do. He makes man responsible for his own actions and choices. And God also punishes and rewards according to what His people do.

And the record tells us that Israel were delivered by the mighty arm of God from Egypt by the way of the Red Sea, and the news went to all the then known world so that men as far as Tyre and Sidon feared.

And it was not so long till this great company of one-time slaves, with all their possessions were at the border of the land, ready to enter. This was at Kadesh-Barnea. But something happened at Kadesh-Barnea and these people did not enter the land as was intended. They wandered another 38 years in the wilderness until another generation was raised up, and they entered in under Joshua.

God was able to take this people into the land. There was no question of power. But He did not and could not. Why?

In the first place this people had a mission to perform. They were a chosen channel of blessing to the nations. In the second place it is a principle set down by the sovereign God that men obtain good thru faith. We must remember that there is an accuser who is at all times watching and waiting that he may find a fault with the creature. He also is watching and waiting to find some fault with the Creator. That is why that God has been careful to remind us that He is just and at the same time the Justifier of the ungodly. His ways must be just or the accuser will then try to find a loophole for his own escape, from the judgment that has been pronounced upon him.

So in Hebrews we are told that Israel did not enter the land because of unbelief. They did not fulfill the demands of a sovereign God. They were not prepared for the task that they were to do. God made the rules, not Israel. They were in no position to blame God for their not entering the land.

And there is a parallel to this example that is given to us. Men do not enter salvation for the simple reason that they do not believe. God is not willing that any should perish, but nevertheless many do perish because of unbelief. Can anybody blame God for this situation? Or is it the unbeliever's own responsibility? And just how could they be saved if they despised the sin offering? Is there another sacrifice?

There is much we can learn in Jacob's life history. He and his brother Esau were very dissimilar in character, Esau being an open-air man, fond of hunting and as far as the Bible shows, honest and straightforward. Jacob on the other hand was deceitful and perhaps weaker. There was one great difference between them, however. Esau placed no value on the promises made to his grandfather Abraham, and also his father Isaac, which would normally descend to him as the birthright of the eldest son. Jacob coveted it. This made all the difference in God's sight.

God had told Rebekah that the elder son would serve the younger, and she had no doubt told this to Jacob. Unfortunately, he and his mother, when they thought Isaac was going to give the blessing to Esau, instead of allowing God to handle things His way, embarked on a plan of deceit. Jacob was not averse to practising deceit as long as he wasn't found out. MY FATHER PERADVENTURE WILL FEEL ME, AND I SHALL SEEM TO HIM AS A DECEIVER (Ge 27:12). The deception of the meat must needs be followed by the deception of the wearing of the skins of kids and Esau's raiment. The steps lead downward and now follow lies. He says to his father, I AM ESAU THY FIRSTBORN (27:19) and this is repeated when Isaac says, ART THOU MY VERY SON ESAU? (27:24) and Jacob replies, I AM.

Esau (who had already given up his birthright) now finds on his return that Jacob has robbed him also of the blessing. His father says, THY BROTHER CAME WITH SUBTILTY AND HATH TAKEN AWAY THY BLESSING to which Esau replies, IS NOT HE RIGHTLY NAMED JACOB (Supplanter). As a result Jacob has to flee from his home to Padan-aram where he serves Laban, his uncle, for twenty years and finds him a hard and avaricious master (Ge 31:41). Both of them were *two of a kind* and deceived each other. Laban tricks Jacob into serving 14 years for his wives and six for the speckled cattle. Jacob in turn deceives Laban by causing the strong cattle to conceive speckled and spotted leaving the weak for Laban.

A deceitful man is not open, consequently Jacob steals away secretly with his wives and all that he had gotten. Laban discovers his departure three days later (31:22). Jacob is now faced with a return to his own country and the brother he had defrauded, which causes him extreme anxiety. Israel as a nation are to experience this before the Messiah they so wrongfully used returns to earth (Je 30:7). Jacob had to learn that he could deceive and contend with men, but not with God. If we resort to lies and deceit for our own ends or the service of the Lord, we shall as surely reap trouble as did Jacob. It took the grace of God to take over a man like Jacob and make him the father of a great nation, His chosen people. When we reflect upon the Jacob we see within ourselves, we give thanks to God who has overruled all things not according to what we deserve, but in the grace and love shown to us through His dear Son. God is abundantly able.

WHY DID FELIX TREMBLE?

AC 23,24

The common superstition is that Felix was scared of death and the judgment that should follow. But we want to use this study as an example of how to treat the Scriptures in such matters. There is always a demand for right division. We cannot form any notions we please from a superficial reading of a passage. We must see how it fits with the context. We must not read into it any later revelation which was not known at the time it was written.

First we must see that Felix knew something of the matters that were argued. His wife was a Jewess, Drusilla. So when Paul spoke to him of Jewish beliefs, Felix would have some understanding of what was said.

Felix could understand what Paul meant by a resurrection of the just and the unjust. The Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees, believed that. They got it from such passages as Da 12:2 and the like. Note that in all these passages the believer is in view. Gentiles and others did not have a part, as far as they knew. But they did know that all believers would be raised and judged according to their works. They also knew from their Scriptures that the unbeliever had no works to be judged of, either good or bad. So Felix did not tremble at this.

But in Ac 24:25 Paul reasoned with Felix about righteousness, temperance, and *judgment to come*. Then is when Felix trembled. And well he might. For if the Judge of all the earth were to appear at any time, as Paul preached, here was Felix with a Jew as his prisoner. What would he have to say to the Judge?

When in Athens, Paul preached the same thing. In Ac 17:31 Paul told the Athenians that God had appointed a day in which the world would be judged in righteousness by One ordained, One raised from the dead. They were not told that they would die and after that a judgment. And the basis of the judgment would be how they had treated the Jews, the believing remnant (Mt 25:31-46). This is a judgment of the living nations, those left on the earth after the tribulation and the pouring out of God's wrath on the kingdom of the beast.

So Felix was not trembling because he thought he was going to die and then come into judgment. He trembled because he was afraid that the Judge would come in his lifetime and find him wanting.

And Heb 9:27 has been the source of much tradition and superstition because men do not know their Bibles. That verse tells us that men who were high priests were appointed once to die, and after the death of the high priest comes the judgment of the man who had fled to a city of refuge (Num 35:28). He was set free and could go in and out at will.

As was said before, Felix knew something of what the Jews believed. And they did not believe that the unbeliever would be raised from the dead. In 2 Mac. 7:14 the 4th son of the woman that had 7 sons, who were put to death by Antiochus, said to the wicked king, *As for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life.*

So we cannot read modern superstition into this passage about Felix. Stick to the Word.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #44

DENTON C. ABBEY

In the next few articles, starting with No. 15, we tried to reconcile some of the present day theories concerning hell with our views. We listed a number in that issue, and then took each one and tried to place it in its proper place in relationship to the Bible as a whole. We tried to point out the fallacies of using individual verses to prove a doctrinal truth. We are not going into these again, due to the time involved. However we will stress a few as we review this area of study.

The dominant factor that we tried to bring out in these articles was the error of basing a doctrine or type of theology on one or two verses of Scripture to the exclusion of all others. We will admit that such verses as 2Co 5:8 and Lu 16 present problems. These need to be reconciled to our thinking as a whole, but not to the exclusion of all other Scripture. We must remember that there are far more references and inferences to the opposite view. These are the ones we must not neglect.

Now the problem facing the Berean student and the serious Christian is, which of these two philosophies he is going to follow and why. This has been our aim and desire in this series. We do not necessarily ask that you believe as we do. It is rather a question of giving you, the reader, the opportunity of judging these theories pro and con, and then decide for yourself. Your salvation or hope is not predicated on anything that I may say or do. Rather it is based on what GOD HATH SAID. And our purpose is to bring these to you for comparison. By condensation, general outline, and direct quote, we can present these to you in an orderly manner that simplifies the whole operation. With a minimum of study and time you can receive all that GOD HATH SAID, and with slight research arrive at your own conclusions.

The next series of articles I hope to do will be on these little known gems of knowledge that are used by our teachers to fathom the mysteries of the Bible. One of the greatest tools I was introduced to was the art of using subject study instead of random reading of the gospels and epistles. And this fact alone, I think, disposes of much of the criticism directed toward the dispensational movement. We are sometimes accused of being Paulists or prison epistle apostles, to the exclusion of the rest of Scripture. However, the fact that most of our help is derived from subject study immediately decrees that you must search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation to complete a study of this type. But more of this later.

Sorry that I have digressed a little from The Quick and the Dead, but this seemed to be pertinent to our explanation.

These quotes in article 15 pretty well sum up the verses used to prove a hell and/or an instantaneous resurrection. These are quoted often as proof without the hearer being enlightened as to the opposing view or context. Therefore he may be led astray thru his own ignorance and/or the culpability of his advisor. The Bereans were more noble (Ac 17:11).

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

97. *How does one get into the church of the dispensation of the mystery? How much does one have to know and believe?*

In John 3:16 we learn that *whosoever* can believe and have everlasting life. And that *whosoever* is you, I, or anybody else. But when it comes to membership in the church, that is a different question. The members are chosen from among those that have life. The Lord reminded His disciples that they did not choose Him, but that He chose them. No one came and joined that band of his own will. Those that were chosen responded to the call and accepted it by faith. So the membership in the church is first made up of those that are chosen (Eph 1:4) and they accept this choosing or salvation by faith (Eph 2:8,9). The members are then given knowledge and built up (edified).

98. *What is the significance of the star seed and the sand seed?*

None, except that these are used to describe a numberless number. You forgot to mention that the seed of Abraham would also be as the dust of the earth for number. And the Book does not mention them as star seed, sand seed, or dust seed. These can form no basis for classifying Israel. It is well to keep to what the Word says and not try to add to it.

99. *Is there danger of going to extreme and becoming ultra-dispensational or hyper-dispensational? Is there danger of going so far as to go right thru the mystery, as some say?*

What does the Word say? For instance, we find that the theme of Philipians and Hebrews is the same, *going on to perfection*. But they are about two different families or dispensations. Is there any warning that one might become ultra-perfect or hyper-perfect? Does Paul tell us to beware of going too far into perfection? Take an example from the OT. Did Joshua ask the people not to cross the Jordan for fear that they would go right thru the land and not get stopped? What if Abraham had gone only half-way up the mount with Isaac? What if our Lord had only gone half-way to Calvary? It is well to stay clear of the compromisers. Their reasoning is usually outside the Scriptures.

100. *I am troubled because I do not seem to find time for Bible study. Does not the family and the church come first?*

If one is too busy to read and study the Word, he is too busy. Usually the folks who come up with this excuse are up on other things, such as TV, the newspaper (and maybe even the Sunday edition), what is going on in the community, and the like. I have said before that I believe that folks find time to do what they want to do. Let us just face the facts; is it because you do not want to read and study the Word? Do you find it a chore and somewhat boring? What has happened to your first love for the Lord? What you need is a thoro self-examination. Many of the pioneers of our country had time for Bible reading and prayer every day and also time to go to church three times on Sunday as well as to a prayer meeting during the week. Just think it over.

Once your editor had an old desk that was always cluttered up, so a couple of years ago, he got a new one. But it is about as bad as the old one. Some letters get laid back and remain unanswered for some time. Of course there are some other duties that take time, such as the farm work and the part time job which keep the wolf from the door. But he does manage to get Truth For Today mailed on the first of the month 12 times a year. It is free to anyone anywhere upon request. Also your editor has a Bible class at his home each Tue. nite at 7:30 to which all are welcome to come. The location is the first house west of where 600W comes into 100S. Those who plan to come to visit should get more specific instructions. Visitors are welcome.

The book business has been brisk lately. It has been hard to keep up with the orders for Vol. 6 of the Alphabetical Analysis by Mr. C. H. Welch. Also his book, Satisfied, has been in good demand. These 2 books are \$2.50 and \$1.50 resp. And those who like to get the bound volumes of the Berean Expositor probably know that we now have Vol. 41. It is \$3. Those who would like some back volumes to finish their sets, should write stating what ones they lack. Also the same with Things to Come. Odd volumes turn up at times. If you have any to sell, let us know. The address is, Truth For Today, Inc. R2, Warsaw, Ind. The telephone is (Area 219) Ulysses 8-2684. Dial direct, 85-8-2684.

Those who were here do not need to be told what a good time we had at the anniversary this year. Some even want it twice a year!

For tape recordings of Bible studies, get in touch with BIRM, P.O. Box 3249, Scottsdale, Ariz. If you have trouble finding a tape recorder, write your editor. He may be able to help you. Also he can supply you with Companion Bibles; in maroon buckram \$15; in green quarter leather \$19. Ask about all kinds of concordances, study Bibles, Berean Publications, and the like. We have a large stock.

Don't forget to write. We like letters.

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