

## THE TRIUNE GOD IN EPHESIANS ONE

1:3-14

In this section we can see God working in 3 persons, as He does in all the Word. But here the relationship is so plain and real that it is hard to miss it. Altho this epistle was written for us Gentiles who are members of the church of the dispensation of the mystery, yet this doctrinal truth is true in all dispensations.

I. *The Father, His will.* As we go thru the Scriptures we can catalog some of the actions of God as Father. He gave (Joh 3:16). You can think of many more and list them. God as Father has a will concerning His children and His sons. Here it is stated that He wills that they be *holy and without blame before Him*. Similar statements may be found elsewhere. Is God's will always realized? Eventually, but not now. We can know that His will is not being done in heaven at the present time. But some day it will be. But not till Satan is cast out (Re 12). Are you holy and without blame?

And there are things the Father does not will. He does not will that any should be lost. But a lot of folks are lost notwithstanding.

The Father has set machinery in motion that will bring about the realization of His will in those that are saints and faithful. It is;

II. *The Son, His work.* In verse 7 we find that this work of the Son is redemption. So God as Father wills, and as Son He works. In order that the will may be carried out, there must first of all be a redemption, for all have been sold under sin. And the price paid is the precious blood of Christ. In Ac 20:28 we are told that God purchased His church with His own blood. So there we have the proof that Christ is God. And there are many similar passages.

Included in this redemptive work is the forgiveness of sins. Without this work there is no possibility of forgiveness. Being just, God cannot overlook a single sin, no matter how small. All must be brot under the penalty. That is what our Lord did. He became the sin offering and died in our stead.

III. *The Spirit, His witness.* We have proof that the redemption price was sufficient in that the Spirit of God raised Christ from the dead. If there had been no first-fruits, then we could not be certain of the harvest to follow.

And in this place (Eph 1:13) the Spirit seals those that believe. This seal is an earnest, a guarantee payment to ensure that some day the transaction will be completed in resurrection. A pledge has been given which cannot be withdrawn. It is as sure and firm as all the Word of God. The Lord knows them that are His and when He calls every one will answer. When a person comes to know that some change has been made, that there is a new nature within, that things about have become new or are seen in a new light, he may be certain that he has the seal. This seal shows ownership. It cannot be broken. No one dares to tamper with it. Have you noticed in Eph 2:20-22 that the saints of today are builded into a temple of living stones in which God dwells as the Spirit? So it is God that wills, that works, and that bears witness. God reveals Himself in 3 persons.

## THE WAYS OF ERROR

Concerning the justification of the believer, there are 3 common forms of error that were extant in the times of the apostles and even today are still prevalent.

I. *The Pharisaic Error.* This was the teaching that in the flesh man might be perfected; that by the deeds of the law he might attain unto righteousness, even unto life. The Roman epistle was written to refute this notion and declares that the law cannot give either righteousness or life.

The man who thinks he can improve the flesh is soon in the temple thanking God that he is not as other men are, and is not backward about letting others hear his prayer. In going about to establish his own righteousness, he forgets the required righteousness, and becomes vain and proud. He is intolerant of anybody who does not come up to his standard of morality.

And this is the philology that makes a man think that he can pile up merits from his good works, and so can take an indulgence once in a while. Any notion that the righteousness required might be the gift of God is offensive to his religious standing and pride.

II. *The Galatian Error.* These were the folks who tried to carry on to perfection in the flesh that which had begun in the spirit. They confessed that initial justification was by faith in the work of Christ, but that from there on they were to complete it by works. It was a mixture of faith and works. They professed to be saved by faith, but that they must keep that salvation by the works of the law.

So at the first they would stand in the temple and ask God to be merciful to them as sinners, and then push everybody aside as they marched out with a holier-than-thou attitude.

The Biblical ground of justification is faith, not faith and works, nor is it a mingling of sacraments with the gospel. Neither can they put their faith in the place of Christ's faithfulness. The Galatian letter was written to warn against this error and any other gospel.

III. *The Antinomian Error.* The epistle of James was written to warn of this error. The name might not be quite correct for today, but in its broader sense, it can be applied. These were the folks who did not like to have the law or the will of God made known. They figured that if they believed in a supreme deity, and recognized the work of Christ intellectually, that they could obtain justification. They were reminded that devils believe and tremble. They were reminded that true faith was active and produced appropriate words. Paul did not disagree with that principle but declared that faith not only was the channel by which salvation was received, but also the knowledge of good works which were before ordained.

The antinomian is one who will recognize the finished work of Christ in behalf of mankind, that it is a historical fact, but it does not touch his life. Our Lord reminded such that except they eat His flesh and drink His blood there is no life in them. Christ must be a reality in our life, not a picture of a man.

## GOD THE FATHER

The first person of the triune God is the one carrying the title, Father. And those who are curious about such things will at once ask why that God should first of all reveal Himself as a Father. Have you ever thought of it?

Of course we can have no idea of God in His essence. That is in a realm strange to us. And that is why that He has come down to the level of our experiences to make Himself known. We can know God only relatively. We have to compare Him with the things we know.

Now it is true that under ordinary circumstances, the father in the family is the ruler of the family. He is also the provider. And he loves his family. So God has used this figure to make us understand that He is like the ideal loving father of an earthly family in His relation to us. What better illustration could He have chosen? Can you suggest one?

And this brings up another point that we should remember. Our concept of God is going to be limited to our concept of an earthly father. May I ask just how much one is going to think of God as a loving father if that one comes from a broken home in which there was strife and no respect for either father or mother? Just what is the concept carried by the average school child of today? Will it help that child to understand about God? Before God, a father has a great responsibility these days.

I understand that in the Argentine morality is so low that when a child is born it is often hard to identify the father. So the law is that the child must bear the maiden name of the mother. So there the children do not bear the name of the father, but of the mother. How is a missionary in such a country going to explain God as a father?

And so it goes in the so-called civilized countries of the world. The father has lost his place in the family, if there is a family.

And would it be to the advantage of the enemy if he could erase morality so that this aspect of God could not be learned?

Our Lord Himself emphasized the title of Father and used it in illustrations. He asked if a real father would give a child a stone if it was asking for bread.

We can understand a little more now why the apostle stressed the duties of a father in Ephesians and Colossians. Every father today who professes the faith has the responsibility of doing his very best in every duty so as to show forth the character of God. His actions are going to show a lot more than words ever can. And if he is going to bring up his family in the fear and admonition of the Lord, here is the place to start. Let the children know what the word *father* means by example.

God is pictured to us as a Father who knows the needs of His children, who rewards them, who has made promises and will keep them, who loves His Son, who gives gifts to His children, who is a merciful Father, and who pities His children. Look up *father* in your concordance.

Consider this; Would God the Father cast off any of His children and not claim them?

## THE SECOND COMING

FRED RALPH

Some years ago, when speaking to a Bible class, I referred to the Lord's second coming and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. An elder member of the class got up afterwards and said that Christ had come already and that His kingdom was in our hearts. This attitude seems hard to understand when so much of the Scriptures speak of His coming, not only to *suffering and shame*, but also in *power and great glory*, setting up the kingdom for Israel again and thru them ruling and admonishing the nations.

When the disciples asked the Lord what the signs of His coming would be, He told them of the events which would precede it and finished up by referring to the evil servant who said, *MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING* (M't 24:48). Peter also refers to the scoffers of the last days who shall say *WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING?* (2Pe 3:3,4). When reasoning with the Jewish council in Acts 7, Stephen showed that both Joseph and Moses were rejected by their brethren and had to be sent a second time, and he concluded by saying *I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED, AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD*, thus signifying His readiness to return if they did but repent.

The second coming must therefore be to *His brethren*. It will be the fulfillment of all the promises to their fathers. In the OT it is called *THE DAY OF THE LORD, OR IN THAT DAY*. In Zech 14:7 we read that it will be a day known only to the Lord. In Zech 12 Jerusalem will be made a stone of stumbling for the nations of the earth. He that is feeble in Jerusalem will be as David, and the house of David as God. The Lord will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem and pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication. They shall look on Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him. Also in Zech 14 the Lord will fight against those nations with the plague, as He did the Assyrian host of old. His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives and the mountain shall divide northward and southward in two parts. Thru the valley formed will flow a great river, from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, and presumably on to the gulf of Akaba. Ezekiel prophesies of this great river (ch 47) and says it will abound with fish of the sea. Fishermen will spread their nets from En-ge-di to En-eglaim. The banks will grow trees whose fruits will not fail or leaves fade. From ch 40 onward he gives details and dimensions of the new city which will be built on the plain which will be formed on the northern half of the mount of Olives, together with the Sanctuary and the portions for the Levites and the great Prince. He also gives precise details of the borders and of the portion of each tribe.

These are actual physical facts which cannot be spiritualized away, and we know that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. Man is getting worse, and when the fulness of sin is reached in the *man of sin*, then the time will be ripe for the Lord to come and man's day will be replaced by the Lord's day.

## INTERROGATIONS

## THE PLAN OF THE AGES

145. *Was Adam created immortal?*

He died, didn't he? So we can only conclude that that which dies is mortal. That is what the word means.

146. *Does Ac 2:25-31 mean to tell us that our Lord went to hell where Satan is?*

Satan is not in hell, never has been nor will he ever be there. His end is the lake of fire, not hell. And when we read Re 12 we must come to the conclusion that he is now in heaven and some day will be cast out into the earth. There is no knowledge or device in hell, so if Satan were there, he would be absolutely inactive. People go to hell when they die, all of them. But that is not said of Satan or of angels, whether fallen or otherwise. Our Lord spent 3 days and 3 nites in hell. The Scriptures are plain on this question. He arose, and so will we who believe and have received life.

147. *Did Judas partake of the last Passover with the Lord and the other disciples?*

Whose hand was with the Lord's hand in the dish? (M't 26:23). Again whose hand was in the dish and how many drank of the cup? (Mk 14:20, 23). After the bread and the cup, whose hand was still on the table? (Lk 22:21). Note that it was a couple of nites before that the devil put it in the heart of Judas to betray the Lord (Joh 13:2), and it was at that time that the Lord washed the disciples' feet, Judas included. It was this nite that Judas left the meeting to go to the Jews and make plans for the betrayal. That the disciples should think he was going out to buy provisions that nite (Joh 13:29), proves that this was not the passover feast, but just a supper on some other nite when they could buy things. No shops would be open if that were the passover feast. So we must conclude that Judas had his feet washed on one occasion and on another he ate the passover with the Lord and the other disciples. And even today a man can observe all the church ordinances and still be a devil at heart.

148. *Did the earthquake at the time of the crucifixion open the graves of the saints that came forth?*

It is not likely that it did. In M't 27:52, 53 it tells us that these arose after His resurrection, 3 days later.

149. *You speak of the present time as being the times of the Gentiles, and yet you say it is not the time of prophecy? Explain.*

First, the succession of empires in the image in Da 2 are essentially those that should tread down Jerusalem. They need not be world empires in any sense of the word. So Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Turkey, and now the League of Nations, U. N., or maybe some other organization of nations tread the streets now, making 6 in all or the number of man. This prophecy was uttered when Israel were Lo-Ammi, not My people, and it was a time of the Gentiles. The mystery hid from ages and generations could have been worked out in any time, prophetic or otherwise. But it happens that it began when Israel went off the scene at Ac 28:28. It is not the subject of prophecy.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible does not tell us about eternity. That is not its theme. We know nothing, or at least next to nothing about what was going on before time began. We know very little, if anything, about what will happen when there is no longer time.

In beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the next verse tells us that something happened to that universe, or at least to the earth. And so that necessitates a new heavens and a new earth. That is revealed in the Revelation. That something that happened resulted in sin and death, for they entered this earth thru Adam. And because Adam sinned and fell, there must be a new man, a new creation to take his place.

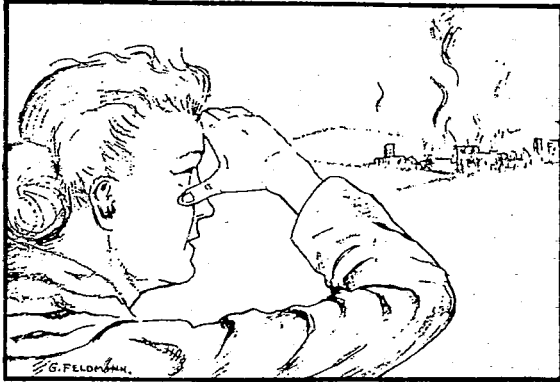
After Adam, man so corrupted his way on the earth and even mixed with fallen angels, that destruction was in order. From the ark 8 persons stepped into a new world to start all over again. But in a few generations idolatry had so permeated the world that the nations were given up to their vile practices and a new nation was called in the person of Abraham whose seed would be a blessing to the other nations and from whom a Savior would come.

But this nation, Israel, failed in her mission. She dominates the pages of the Book from Ge 12 to Ac 28:28 and there was set aside. So at that point the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles. And that necessitates a new nation to be born some day that will take the place of the one that failed. The Revelation is taken up largely with this theme, the restoration of Israel and the land.

Upon the failure of Israel at the end of Acts, a purpose of God which He had kept hidden from ages and generations was revealed for the first time. This purpose primarily has to do with the heavens, where sin and death originated among the angels, principalities, and powers with Satan, the old serpent, as their leader. Their place is to be taken by a chosen group of men from this earth who constitute a church, the body of Christ. No ethnic distinctions here.

Now Israel, with all her hopes and advantages and high calling, never dreamed of going to heaven after resurrection. Their hope was bound up with the earth and its nations and the land that was promised before to Abraham. But you read only to the 3rd verse in Ephesians and you will find the first mention of people being blest in heavenly places. This good news was not only a surprise to mankind, but also a surprise, if not a great shock, to Satan and his satellites. And we need not be surprised if Satan holds to his possessions in these places just as long as he can. But in John 1:12 is also revealed the fact that in this age in which we now live, there are many who do not belong to the church, who by faith become children of God and have a resurrection too. We are not told in John's gospel where and for what purpose this resurrection will be.

But the church today, the mystery which had been hid, is no part of Israel and her blessings. It is a new creation. Now you finish the study.



## REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

LK 17:32

She looked back. Rather a simple thing, was it not? But it had a result. She became a pillar of salt.

Why did she look back? Probably she had daughters there and even grandchildren. Is it not natural to have affection for one's own family? But what had God said? Not to look back. Judgment was at hand and there could be no delay. They must leave quickly.

And in the context with our text is a picture of the setting up of the image in the holy place and the beginning of the great tribulation. And just as soon as that image is put up, those who belong to God can know that there is no time to waste. They must make haste to escape, if it be at all possible.

But back to Lot's wife. Was not this a little harsh for her, seeing that she loved her family? When God says something, it is not ours to delay, question, or try to excuse. He demands obedience. And obedience will always have its reward. How different her action from that of Abraham when he was told to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah!

No doubt Lot and his family had put their affections on things that were temporal, things that could burn up in the fire that came down from heaven. Of course we must remember that Lot did not have any part in the promise made to Abraham. Lot was not obligated to live in tents waiting for a promise. That he should live in a house cannot be counted against him.

But what Lot did that was wrong, was that he got into the wrong neighborhood to settle down and raise a family. The people of Sodom were Canaanites, the seed of the evil one. They were not fit company for righteous Lot and his family. And because he got into the wrong crowd almost cost Lot his life. He did lose his wife and some of his family, escaping with two daughters. And his subsequent conduct showed what a terrible influence Sodom had been in his brief stay there.

True discipleship involves loving Christ more than possessions and family. It calls for one to seek first the will of God and do it, not to follow his own wishes and plans. And once one has started out to do this, there is no looking back; no wishing for the slave fare of Egypt. To walk in newness of life means to leave all the old things behind and forget them.

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