

## -STUDIES IN EPHESIANS- 45

## -IN HEAVEN ITSELF-

They say that every question has two sides. That may or may not be true, but we do see that there are two aspects to Paul's ministry as we find it recorded in Eph. 3:7,8. Tho these 2 aspects may be very different, yet the common denominator is grace.

1. I WAS MADE A MINISTER, ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF THE GRACE OF GOD GIVEN UNTO ME BY THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF HIS POWER.

There is no apology here. The statement is forthright and plain. There is no shrinking. All was ordained of God. There is a spiritual importance and dignity here that is impressive.

The power that worked inwardly to make Paul an apostle is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and which is to usward who believe. The epistle to the Eph. is a veritable powerhouse. Look up all the references to the word and think on them.

Paul was not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles. He was a chosen vessel meet for the Master's use.

Paul was energized to do the will of God. It was the working of the Holy Spirit. In the same epistle we find that some were energized by the evil one to fulfill the desires and lusts of the flesh. That same energy that was in Paul is in every believer. But do we let it work in our life? Do we know anything of this great power? Or do we rely on the flesh and thereby fail?

2. UNTO ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL SAINTS, IS THIS GRACE GIVEN. Here is the other aspect. Here is real humility as becomes a servant of God, yes, even a bond-servant as Paul calls himself. Is this a weakness? Not in the servant of God. Paul knew that when he was weak was when he was strong. Humility is the mark of the strong men of God. Moses, the great warrior and leader of his people, was the meekest of all men on the earth. It was only when he began to express himself in anger that he became weak.

Paul realized that it was not by merit of his own, but that he had been made meet by the power of God and the work of Christ, that he held such an high office. We too must realize that tho we are blest in heavenly places with all spiritual blessings, it is the will of the Father that we be holy and without blame, it is the work of the Son by which we are redeemed, and it is a witness of the Spirit whereby we are sealed. All is done, not by any works of our own.

So we see here that Paul can practice what he preaches. All thru his life we find that he is conscious of the importance of his office, and on the other hand and at the same time, he feels his weakness and knows that it is by grace and the power of God that he is what he is.

Here is balance. But it is easy to go overboard either way: become proud of position and blessings and fall; or see only the weakness of the flesh and never accomplish anything. May God keep us where He can use us, and may we ever be ready to mind Him!

If properly balanced, true zeal and true humility can make one a real man of God. In these two aspects, Paul has set before us an example which we will do well to take heed.

NOW THEREFORE YE (Gentiles) ARE NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS. BUT FELLOWCITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD. Eph. 2:19.

Many times we stumbled on this passage in our studies and the question always came up, What saints? If Jew and Gentile had been made one and were one body, then how is it that here we have a separation again?

The expression WITH THE SAINTS in the Greek is TON HAGION. The Interlinear has it OF THE SAINTS, but that does not help very much. There is still a division where there should be unity. Something is wrong.

We find the expression TON HAGION again in Heb. 9:8. It reads, THE HOLY GHOST THUS SIGNIFYING THAT THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST OF ALL WAS NOT YET MADE MANIFEST. Here may be a clue. Going on down in the chapter to the 23rd verse we find another expression that is similar. It is BETTER SACRIFICES. Now this is plural, but it points to the one great sacrifice, the greatest of them all. It is the plural of majesty, which was a common Hebrew idiom and also used in the Greek. An example is the word ELOHIM in Gen. 1:1. The term is plural, but it is translated GOD. Again it is the plural of majesty.

It is the same with TON HAGION. It is the holiest of all, the most holy place, or the holy of holies. As we read on in verse 24 we find that Christ has entered heaven itself. Now this is the same place as in verse 8 which is described as the holiest of all.

Now let us try this meaning on Eph. 2:19. It will read, NOW THEREFORE YE (Gentiles) ARE NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOWCITIZENS IN THE HOLIEST OF ALL (heaven itself). Now it begins to make sense and the unity is not destroyed.

To clinch the matter, we only have to look at Phil. 3:20 where we read, FOR OUR CONVERSATION (citizenship) IS IN HEAVEN. This word citizenship and citizen in Eph. 3 are related. Both passages are telling us that heaven is the place of our citizenship.

We meet TON HAGION again in Col. 1:12. We have an inheritance in the holiest of all in the light (Shekinah glory). Surely we have all spiritual blessings in heaven itself!

In the holiest of all was the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the cherubim. The cherubim looked at the mercy seat where once a year the high priest entered and sprinkled the blood which spoke of Christ and His sacrifice once and for all. When this place was entered, the laver (which spoke of baptisms) and the table of shew bread (which spoke of the Passover or Lord's Supper, so-called) were left behind. They had no place in the holiest of all.

This has a great lesson for us. Never has the flesh been able to do anything for God. So in the dispensation of the mystery, where the believer enters the holy of holies, no longer can he observe ordinances. It is to teach him that now God is to be All in All. We are complete, filled to the full with Christ in Whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

## -GRACE AND HELL-

In the beginning God gave signs, seasons, days and years. But man in his blundering ignorance has so lost all knowledge of them that now he cannot tell what year (anno mundi) it is.

In the beginning God gave man the gospel in the stars, but it has been so corrupted and the names changed to heathen deities, that the message has been lost.

God gave His Word to man, but man has so corrupted it with traditions and translations, that it is difficult to say today whether we have an uncorrupted text anywhere.

Man defiles and corrupts all that he can get his hands on. He has made deserts of vast areas of the earth which once were fertile gardens. Today he is destroying his bird friends and then relying on poisons to control crop pests. He is killing his best friends, the soil bacteria, with fertilizer residues, robbing himself of the minerals which he so badly needs for proper growth and health.

By nature man is a destroyer and a hater of that which is good. By birth he is a child of wrath, whether Jew or Gentile.

God has from the beginning given man a gospel of grace, but man has corrupted it and under the name of Christianity has a great system of works which he still calls a gospel!

But when a man does begin to grasp the gospel of grace as found in the Word of God, one of the first things he begins to question is the traditional HELL. Why?

The gospel of grace declares that Christ died for the ungodly. Man says, No, they will have to suffer for their own sins in the most terrible place of torment and torture that heathen minds have been able to invent or imagine. The gospel of grace says that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Man says, No, He died only for the saved; the rest go to hell. We could go on for pages, but the reader knows enough of the Scriptures that he can fill in the rest for himself.

It is true that if a man gains heaven by good works, then there must be an opposite place for the man who does evil. That is man's reasoning. But salvation is not by works, but by grace thru faith. If that be true and works have nothing to do with it, then it stands to the same reasoning that he cannot be lost by works either.

And that brings us to the focal point of the fact that man does not BECOME lost, but IS lost by birth. He is in sin from conception. Death came upon man thru Adam, one man. Death is the penalty for sin and none can escape it. An untimely death is the penalty for sins in many cases and that was the reason for the law. The law said, THIS DO AND LIVE.

Adam returned to dust and dust he will remain. In resurrection he will have a body made in the heavens, not of earth. Also, the old nature will be gone. Only the new nature created and implanted in him by God will remain.

The old creation is doomed to death in its entirety. Christ is the Head of a new creation which has resurrection as its hope. The old will have passed away; only the new will remain.

## -ALL SAINTS-

(CONTINUED)

We usually think of the Beloved Disciple as the one writer in the NT on the subject of love. But Paul is not far behind. A study of the word LOVE in his epistles would be interesting.

Note God's love to us in Eph. CHOSEN IN LOVE (1:4). ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED (1:6). HIS GREAT LOVE WHEREWITH HE LOVED US (2:4). How gracious is this love! But not because of our worth; it is in His Son.

We are often unlovable. Others are often unlovable. We must recognize this fact and be very careful how we judge. On the other hand we must avoid excusing evil or compromising with it on this account. We must hate evil; and we must have love to all saints.

If love is the sphere of God's actions toward us, then we should have love toward one another, and to the Lord.

The Ephesian epistle also instructs us to be rooted and grounded in love. This is fundamental. Then we are to forbear one another in love. A minister once said that a happy home had to have two bears in it; bear and forbear. It is very nearly Scriptural at that. Then we are to speak truth in love. Some truth can be spoken in hate, but that truth is better not spoken at all.

Growth of the body and the increase of every part is a building up in love. This has to do with the body and members in particular. We are to walk in love. That is to be the tenor of our behavior, for Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. In the dispensation of the mystery there is not the slightest hint or any indication of there being any occasion or grounds for a divorce. When in the realm of the spirit, such fleshly things, belonging to the lusts and desires of the old man, are left far behind. Finally the apostle ends with combining peace, and love with faith and asks for grace to be with those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

In all this there is no room for strife and bickerings. Criticism of a brother is entirely out of place. Alas! We find many who profess to know spiritual things, who can glibly prove that there was a dispensational frontier at the end of Acts, and that Paul was an apostle of the mystery; but they do not know what it is all about. They cannot even define the mystery. These are the ones who cause so much trouble and suffering and give a bad name to a rightly divided Word.

Why do they act as they do, and why do they not understand? It is because that being rooted and grounded in love comes before the word COMPREHEND in 3:17, 18. Those who are not rooted and grounded as they ought to be can never comprehend the truth of the mystery. To such carnal ones, the teaching of the deep things of God is only foolishness, as we find in 1 Cor. 2 & 3. Paul could not give the meat of the Word to carnal babes, so he fed them milk. All he could preach to them was Christ and Him crucified. The benefits of that great sacrifice were practically incomprehensible to them. .. TO BE CONTINUED.

## -AN HABITATION OF GOD-

## -BEGINNERS' CORNER- 11

If we would look up the word DWELL in the concordance and note the times it is used in reference to God dwelling among or in men, a little something interesting will be noted. It would seem that God has a desire to dwell among or in men. For your own reference look up Ex. 25:8 and Rev. 21:3 as the first and last usages.

There may be a little foreshadowing of the mystery in Psa. 68:18, but of course no revelation of it. There we find, THOU HAST RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN; YEA, FOR THE REBELLIOUS ALSO. THAT THE LORD MIGHT DWELL AMONG THEM. The rebellious ones refer to Israel. So there is a hint here that God would be seeking a dwelling among men outside of Israel, but Israel included. It is all the more significant when we consider the fact that this verse is quoted in Eph. 4:8.

But in the dispensation of the mystery it may be noted that God is not to dwell among His people, but in them. While He dwelt among them in the wilderness, He dwelt in the tabernacle. Later He was among them in the temple. But their house was left unto them desolate because of their idolatries and rejection of their King. The house was soon destroyed.

But the dwelling place itself in Jerusalem was not the ideal by any means. The Lord told the Samaritan woman that God was not to be worshipped in a place, but in spirit and truth. Such would do away with temples and other buildings, with any priesthood and any ritual. Just before they began to rain the stones down on Stephen, he said, THE MOST HIGH DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS.

But the world today has not heeded these things. They still go on making temples and houses for God. Why? It seems to be more convenient to put God off somewhere in a house where He can stay alone and people can come to Him there once in a year (at Easter) or maybe more often. But He is not wanted in the home, the social life, or in business. So a building is made for Him and it is called The House of God.

Such truth as we find in Eph. 2:20-22 is almost totally unknown today.

1. Foundation. Apostles and prophets. These are the ones chosen by the risen Lord. See Eph. 4:7-11.

2. Corner stone. Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone, or we might better say that He is the key-stone of the arch.

3. All the building. It is fitly framed together. It was carefully planned. No additions or afterthoughts.

4. Holy temple. The building grows. If it grows, then it must have life. It must be made of living stones.

5. Habitation of God. Builded together in Christ that we might be an habitation of God. Today God dwells in the Church which is the body of Christ. What need for a building made with hands? Have we failed to heed the Word?

There is a question that we would like to ask at this point. What does all this mean to you? Are you a member of the Body of Christ, a part of the great temple in which God dwells? Or, have traditions robbed you of truth?

Turning to Paul's epistle to the Romans we find the full explanation of this grafting in of the Gentiles. Starting with chapter 10 we read of Israel's failures, both under the law and now under Grace, with the summation being given in verse 21. BUT TO ISRAEL HE SAITH, ALL DAY LONG HAVE I STRETCHED FORTH MY HANDS UNTO A DISOBEDIENT AND GAINSAYING PEOPLE. This immediately brings to mind the remark Christ made in Matt. 23:37 as he drew near Jerusalem. O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM, THOU THAT KILLEST THE PROPHETS, AND STONEST THEM WHICH ARE SENT UNTO THEE, HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED THY CHILDREN TOGETHER, EVEN AS A HEN GATHERETH HER CHICKENS UNDER HER WINGS, AND YE WOULD NOT.

Then in 11:1 Paul continues, I SAY THEN, HATH GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE? GOD FORBID... BUT RATHER THRU THEIR FALL SALVATION IS COME UNTO THE GENTILES FOR TO PROVOKE THEM TO JEALOUSY. 11:17 AND IF SOME OF THE BRANCHES BE BROKEN OFF, AND THOU, BEING A WILD OLIVE TREE, WERT GRAFTED IN AMONG THEM, AND WITH THEM PARTAKEST OF THE ROOT AND FATNESS OF THE OLIVE TREE. 11:20,21 WELL: BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF THEY WERE BROKEN OFF, AND THOU STANDEST BY FAITH. BE NOT HIGHMINDED, BUT FEAR: FOR IF GOD SPARED NOT THE NATURAL BRANCHES, TAKE HEED LEST HE ALSO SPARE NOT THEE.

Paul asserts that they were grafted in, that they might be partakers with Israel of the root and fatness of the olive tree. But that the tree itself is Israel is apparent from verse 24 where he calls the Jew the natural branches of the tree.

So once again we see that the Gentile is not being offered any promise or hope of his own, but rather is being allowed the hopes of Israel.

The epistle to the Romans was written just before Paul left to return to Jerusalem for the last time, probably from Corinth. So this dates it with Paul's statement in Acts, just a short while later, that with that chain he was bound for the HOPE of ISRAEL.

We must remember in respect to Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, he consistently went to the Jew first until the very end of Acts. So instead of this being a record of the founding of the Christian church as many would have us believe, it is in reality a record of the apostacy of a favored nation. You might say Paul sums it up in Romans 11:25 FOR I WOULD NOT BRETHREN, THAT YE SHOULD BE IGNORANT OF THIS MYSTERY, LEST YE SHOULD BE WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS; THAT BLINDNESS IN PART IS HAPPENED TO ISRAEL UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN.

That Paul's gospel provokes the Jews to jealousy goes without saying, but instead of causing them to bear fruit, it only widened the chasm between them and their Messiah, and they sought the more to kill the apostles and the prophets, until God's patience was sorely tried, if not at an end, and the words spoken by John the Baptist became a reality. AND NOW ALSO THE AXE IS LAID UNTO THE ROOT OF THE TREES; THEREFORE EVERY TREE WHICH BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT IS HEWN DOWN, AND CAST INTO THE FIRE (Matt. 3:10). But a stump remains; the tree will flourish again some day.

## -THE GOSPEL IN ACTS-

Let us turn to 1 Thess. 1 to see what gospel was preached during the Acts and how a model church received that gospel.

In the first place, we must read Acts 17:1-9 to see how Paul visited this city and how he was received. We note that he spoke in the Synagogue for 3 Sabbaths, but that mostly Gentiles believed. The Jews caused an uproar and Paul had to leave the city.

The basic things preached in Acts were repentance and being baptized. This was the gist of Peter's message in Acts 3:18-26 and should be read in this connection. Peter made it plain that the coming of the Lord was on the condition that Israel repent as a nation. There could be no restitution of all things, no restoration of Israel, nor times of refreshing until Christ came, and He could not come till Israel should say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

With that in mind let us look at 1 Thess. 1:3.

1. Their work of faith. This work of faith on their part was that they turned (same word as repent) to God from idols. See verse 10. It is not that they turned from idols to God. This would be the order of a social gospel or reformation. They turned to God first. That is the correct order. In doing so, they naturally turned from the idols. Too much missionary endeavor is in the realm of reformation, getting folks to put on clothes, to adopt ways of civilization (?), to better their condition. But when folks have done all this they may no longer feel a need for God and the work has been in vain. These folks at Thessalonica turned to God.
2. Their labor of love. This was to serve the living and true God. No longer serving idols and empty superstitions and traditions which had no life and which could never help them. Their service of the living God was not in fear, but in love. It was their labor of love.
3. Their patience of hope. They were waiting for His Son from heaven. Again this was the message of Peter in Acts 3. He said that the heaven must receive Christ till the restitution of all things was accomplished. The hope of the Pentecostal church all during Acts was the near return of the Lord. In chapter 4 of 1 Thess. Paul describes that coming and includes himself as waiting for that hope.

But Israel did not repent. The Lord did not come. Paul died instead of being caught up alive. The Thessalonians died, none being caught up alive. Israel's hope for the returning Messiah has been postponed and it is still future.

But what of this interval in the meantime, which has stretched out to almost 2,000 years? That of course is another subject and we have discussed it at length in other articles. Briefly, our hope today is not the Lord FROM heaven, but the Lord IN heaven. Our resurrection will be in heaven in which place we then will await His glorious appearance and manifestation.

If any of these Thessalonian saints did not live to hear the new gospel of the dispensation of the mystery, they have not been robbed of their hope by any means. He will yet come.

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