

-STUDIES IN EPHESIANS- #36

-THE SECOND LIFE-

HAVING ABOLISHED THE ENMITY IN HIS FLESH, THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS IN ORDINANCES. Eph. 2:15. You may notice that this is not quoted from any version, but is rather the sum and substance of what we find in the Rotherham version.

In our last study we had the subject HE IS OUR PEACE. Then follows two things that make for peace;

1. The middle wall of partition broken down.
2. The enmity in His flesh abolished.

We will have to explain these two things. In doing so we will notice that they are very much the same and have to deal with the flesh.

The principal thing in the wall of partition was circumcision. The enmity in His flesh was the fact that He was first of all an Israelite and came to save His people, Israel, from their sins.

Both these are obstacles to peace. In the church of the dispensation of the mystery both must be abolished or taken down. Neither can stand where there is the unity of the Spirit.

In Rom. 9:5 we read that Christ came as concerning the flesh to Israel. According to the flesh Israel had a prior claim to Him as Messiah. In the flesh, the Gentile was without Christ (Eph. 2:12). But even as early as 2 Cor. 5:15-17 Paul said that they as believers no longer knew Christ after the flesh. He was no longer just the Messiah of Israel, but He was a light unto the Gentiles. Those who yet today call Him by His earthly name Jesus may run into some of that enmity. Those who wish to take Him for an example instead of obeying His words, are in the realm of the flesh with its enmity.

When the Corinthian believers no longer knew Him after the flesh, they recognized the fact that He died for all. There was a new creation. Christ was the federal head of this new creation. Adam was the head of the old creation. But in Adam was death. In Christ there is life, all in Him will be made alive.

In the dispensation of the mystery all the old things have passed away. There is only the new creation remaining.

Circumcision made with hands was a wall between Jew and Gentile. On one side of it were those that could enter the temple. On the other those who could not. On one side were those who could partake of the Passover. On the other those who could not. On one side were those who according to the promises made to the fathers looked for the Messiah. On the other were those who were not a people and who were without hope of a Messiah. All of this made for enmity. The Jew could boast in the flesh about these things.

Now all ordinances have passed away. We are free from the decrees of Moses. We are free from all the decrees of the council in Jerusalem. We are free from the decrees of any man.

How can men, who have the heavenly hope and citizenship, who mind things above and not things on the earth, enter into things that pertain to the flesh? It is grace that reigns. All enmity is abolished. Christ Himself is our peace. Let us not go into bondage again.

1. LIFE GIVEN. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became A LIVING SOUL."

It does not say that man was given a soul, but that he became one. He was given soul, as were the other creatures (Gen. 1:20). The word LIFE there is the same as SOUL in 2:7. The translators chose to render the word SOUL in the case of man and LIFE in the case of animals. In the Heb. it is one word (nepesh).

Adam did not have everlasting life or immortality in any way. He was subject to death. He was warned that he might die. He knew what death was for it was evident all about him. This death had entered the world millions of years before Adam. All the trees and herbs were getting nourishment from dead matter. But everlasting life was within his grasp, for the tree of life was in the midst of the garden.

2. LIFE LOST. By this one man Adam, sin entered this renewed earth, and by sin came death upon the human race. That life which Adam might have prolonged was forfeited. That it was not immediate death, as God had said, was only because of a third party being present, the tempter.

Finally when Adam was 810 years old, God set the limit on his life and allowed only 120 more years, and Adam died when he was 930. As we read of the lives of the patriarchs up to the flood, with one exception, it says "And he died."

That is true of all Adam's children. They die. It were a horrid thing if this life were to be prolonged unto eternity. That is why God drove Adam from the garden in a hurry after the fall. See Gen. 3:22-24.

3. THE QUESTION. Job knew about the fall and the reason for death. So he asks the question, If a man die, shall he live again? It is not a question of whether he will continue to live, but whether he will live again. Today most folks miss this and Satan has them believing that death does not end life.

Adam was told what death was. It was a return to dust (Gen. 3:19). Adam could understand that for did he not see it in the case of plants and animals? The Word declares that animals and men all die alike and all go to the same place (Eccl. 3:19, 20). But there is one difference; some of the men have a hope. It is the hope that they may have another life given to them instead of the one lost by Adam.

4. LIFE GIVEN. So then there is a second life. But it is only for some. It is to whosoever of John 3:16. None others will ever see life (John 3:36). They return to the dust and they stay there. They have not accepted the gift of God, eternal life in His Son.

The life that was given to Adam was put into his own keeping. He lost it. But the second life is not given to man to keep. It is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). There it is in safe keeping. It would not be safe if left in our hands. Those who fear being lost after being saved are like the man who sat with shotgun on the bank steps after he had deposited his money. Remember, God shut the door when Noah entered the ark. None could open it.

-WHERE WORK AND PRAYER BEGIN-

In 1 Tim. 1:16 Paul declares that he was a pattern to those who thereafter should believe on Christ to life everlasting. If you will read all the verses 12-16 you will find that Paul gives a short resume of his life and his conversion. There are two things that stand out in his life that we ought to look into if he is to be a pattern to us.

1. On the Damascus road, Paul had said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This was said as if Paul up to that time had never done anything. Yet we know from Paul's own testimony that he had been engaged in good works all his life. As touching the law, he was blameless. Paul shows forth all his gains or works in Phil. 3 and he enumerates 7 things that to him were gain. If any other man could boast of his works, Paul would add, "I more." Not only had he kept the law written by Moses, but he had kept the additions that had been invented by the religionists of the time. Paul was a very religious man. But his religion had not saved him. He had been prodigal with good works, but they had not saved him.

All this goes to show that today church membership and good works can save no man. Paul was a pattern to show the foolishness of such an idea. He was so far ahead of all the others of his time that at every turn he could say, "I more." At that time he thought he was the best of persons and so did other men think too. But on the Damascus road all this was changed. Paul was ready to start all over again. His question was, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Before this he had done what he thought was the right thing to do. Now he is ready for instructions from the Lord. Oh, that we had folks like that today!

2. Then when the Lord spoke to Ananias in Damascus about Paul, He said, "He prayeth." It seems that Paul had never prayed before. But had he? Certainly! Did not the Pharisees love to pray in the temple and on the street corners to be seen of men? Did they not have great long prayers? Did they not paint their faces so as to appear to have been fasting? No doubt many people had seen Paul, the ardent Pharisee, standing on some corner or in the temple making long prayers.

But the prayers of the religionists never get very far. They receive their reward in that they hope to be seen of men. But they are not heard by God. There is nothing so cold and lifeless as orthodoxy. Nothing so uninviting and repulsive to the poor sinner who would have mercy and pardon. Could it be that the Pharisee praying in the temple (Luke 18) was Paul? It might have been. If so, he was bragging about his works then. He says, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Yes, that could have been the proud Paul, for that was the way he did before the incident on the Damascus road.

But God was merciful to Paul. He finally prayed like the publican. Finally his works were in accord with the will of God, not what men demanded. He basked in the grace of God. He became a pattern to such as would believe.

-WHAT GRACE DOES-

Grace is favor. But that is only half of it. It is favor to the undeserving. That is why it is so precious to all of us. None of us ever deserved any favor of any kind from God. But nevertheless He has shown us favor, His matchless grace.

In Titus 2:11-13 we find two things that grace does for us;

1. It brings salvation. It brings salvation to all men. It does this without distinction, but not without exception, else all men would be saved. Grace brings salvation to rich and poor, good and bad, all races, all people without any distinction of any kind. But it has to be received to be effective.

2. It teaches us. That which brings salvation also teaches us. But what does it teach?

1. To live soberly. This has to do with our self restraint or control. It means that we have ourselves well in hand in all things. It is that which concerns the life within. It is the world within us.

2. To live righteously. Some idea or a standard of good living cannot do this. Education is powerless to help. Orthodoxy also is a failure in this realm. It is that which brings salvation that can teach us to live righteously. This is in respect to the world without.

3. To live godly. All that are willing to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). Grace trains us to do everything in reference to God. This is the godly life. God is constantly in our thoughts. To live such a life, of course, cuts one off from the world and also from the careless Christians. To have an opinion that may differ from theirs will put up a wall that is unsurmountable. So those that live godly also live lonely. This has to do with the world above.

4. To look for...hope...appearing. The hope is called that blessed hope. It is a great and glorious appearing (not coming) of God, the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ. Do we look for that appearing while here on the earth? No. It cannot be that this appearing will be to any except resurrected people. Why? This appearing will be in the heavens. It is hardly probable that any but resurrected folks will attain to that place which even Lucifer failed to mount. We look for this appearing from the viewpoint of our place of citizenship. We look for it after resurrection. No wonder it is called that blessed hope!

So we must conclude that one of the first things that we as believers can do to please God is to let that superabounding grace of His teach us to live -- to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. The negative side is in verse 12, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. However, if the believer puts his mind to the positive side, the negative will pretty well take care of itself.

If you will but look at the beginning of this little epistle to Titus, you will find there the word godliness in company with acknowledging of the truth. It is an epistle on practical living of the Christian. It is full of good pointers. Now read the whole epistle.

-THE FLAMING SWORD-

"So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and THE flaming sword which turned every way (not aside or about or toward or any such expression, but every way), to keep the way of the tree of life." See Gen. 3:24, Companion Bible.

This chapter in Genesis is a great one. It is a good place to begin our studies. But it is the last place the world wants to begin its thinking. For here is the proof that man has fallen and has lost his paradise.

Man can never regain this paradise by any efforts of his own. For ages and ages men have tried it. They placed groves and idols in high places in earliest times, trying to regain paradise. But with these efforts were the terrible fruits of the flesh and sin. Idolatry was always associated with nudism and the grossest immorality. Years ago Dr. Bullinger, in his magazine Things to Come said that some of the worst dives in London were called Eden. Not only can man never attain to a restored paradise, but he does not have the capacity to enjoy it if he could. He is too fallen in his nature. He cannot desire what is good.

Even in the pulpits today, men are still trying to regain paradise. There are all kinds of social gospels and reform movements. There are many who lobby in the legislative halls, who vainly think that all that is needed is a law for this and a law for that. But fallen man is not only lawless as far as this world is concerned, but the natural man is not subject to the law of God, neither can be. Legislation can never cure the evil.

The modern social gospel would substitute "In His Steps" for His words. That makes void His words. All of this is in the realm of human endeavor, taking no notice of the finished work on Calvary. The very best that any man can do in the way of righteousness is only as filthy rags in the sight of God. The Father is looking for righteousness that is perfect. Only the Son has ever had it. So if man is not clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Son, he has no access to the Father. Our only hope is not what we do, but what He did.

Man, in his colossal ignorance, would put new wine in old bottles, or patch an old garment with a nice bright new patch. But the bottles will burst. The rent will be made worse. So much for the efforts of a man to better his condition spiritually before God.

Every way is closed against fallen mankind. He must die. There is no approach to the tree of life till resurrection. This, man cannot believe. It hurts his pride.

We must begin where all false teachers propose to end. We must begin with death. "For ye died" is the end of the old creation. The new creation begins with "Your life is hid with Christ in God." In which of these creations do we find ourselves today?

Also the new creation or life cannot be improved. You cannot "deepen" it. Those whose minds and affections are set on things above are not occupied with themselves and their attainments, but meditate upon Christ and His work. Nothing can so effectually mortify our members on the earth as this meditation.

-BEGINNERS' CORNER- #2

If God had been dealing with the Gentiles during OT times, why do we not find some reference to this in the Bible? Certainly God would not be guilty of race segregation by giving all His attention to Israel and never mentioning the heathen, had they been equal in His sight. Nowhere do we find the Gentiles mentioned in the Bible excepting when they are in some manner connected with Israel, or in the later epistles of Paul.

Christ told the woman of Canaan, when she appealed to Him to heal her daughter, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 15:24. John, in his gospel, starts out by saying, "He (Christ) came unto His own (Israel) and His own received Him not." But you may say this means any Christian, any believer, Jew or Gentile. However, if you will again search your Scripture you will find no mention of the word Christian until the year A. D. 42 at Antioch some 20 years later. Acts 11:26. If it doesn't apply to Israel, why later does he use the word "whosoever" (or as many as)? Who are these "other many"? Read the first 21 verses of Matt. 1, and I quote the 21st, "He will save HIS PEOPLE from their sins." You will note in the earlier verses that His people were the generations of Abraham.

Conversely you will find many references to the fact that God was going to raise up a seed to rule over His people. Isa. 9:1 tells us "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Jer. 23:5, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King---." The Sceptre shall not depart from the house of Judah, quoted from Gen. 29:8. All this takes us back to Gen. 11:8 where God gave up the nations. See Rom. 1:20-26 for further explanation. Then He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and told him that He would make him a great nation, a peculiar people and a blessing unto the Gentiles (Gen. 12:1-2).

When Peter went to the house of Cornelius it was necessary that God reveal this to him in a special vision, that no man was unclean. Again if God had been dealing with Gentiles all these years, Peter should have known it. He had been with Christ for 3 years and I'm sure in that length of time He (Christ) would have made His views clear. When Christ sent them out 2 by 2, He must have given them some instructions. In Matt. 10:5 we find those instructions. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." Is it any wonder that Peter was hesitant about going to Cornelius with these instructions still in his mind? Of course the whole answer is given to the question by Peter himself when before the council he said, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation---" Acts 10:28.

These are strange words indeed, coming from the Word of God if we are trying to preach all things to all people. As Peter said in that same speech, "Who was I that I should withstand God?" Do we withstand God?

--Denton C. Abbey



-DO YOU KNOW?-

-BOOKS-



11. O. When did the distinction between Jew and Gentile believers cease and the both become one?
- A. In the council at Jerusalem, the account is given in Acts 15, there was a distinction made. The Gentile, according to their decision, was not subject to the law as was the Jew. Paul says in Gal. 2:7, "The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." This gospel of the uncircumcision Paul calls MY GOSPEL. In Rom. 3 Paul says that the Jew has every advantage. This was written just a short time before Acts 28:28. But in Eph. 2:11-22 we find all such distinctions have been abolished. There is no longer a difference. Both have been made one.
12. O. When were members of a church first called "Saints and faithful"?
- A. The 7 epistles Paul wrote before the end of Acts were to whole groups or to churches whether they were faithful or not. He wrote to babes who could only take milk. He wrote to unbelieving believers as in the case of the Corinthian letters. These were called saints, but were not said to be faithful. Check this. But the first epistle written after Acts was Eph. and there for the first time Paul speaks to saints and faithful, using the two terms together. It is not to all the saints at Ephesus, but only to the faithful ones. There is a note of warning we should not miss.
13. O. When did the preaching of the Word cease to be the sole right and prerogative of the Jew?
- A. In Rom. 3:2 we find that the oracles of God were committed to the Jew. This was one of their national advantages. In Rom. 9:4 we find that to the Israelites pertained the service of God. Nearly all the churches before the end of Acts were in Synagogues and there the Gentile not only could not take part, but had to be to one side as were the women. That he should address a Synagogue would have been unthinkable. When all distinctions were abolished between Jew and Gentile, naturally one would not have any priority over the other in preaching the gospel.
14. O. When did tongues, signs, and visions cease and faith, and faith alone, become God's order?
- A. Just a sketchy reading of Acts and the epistles written during that time will convince one that all the gifts of Pentecost were in evidence till the end of the Acts. See Acts 28:3-9 for example. No such things can be found after Acts. Paul no longer can heal the sick, but gives a prescription in the case of Timothy with his weak stomach. Other workers are sick from time to time, but no healing for them now. Trust is now the key that unlocks the door of faith to us Gentiles (Eph. 1:11).

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