

## -STUDIES IN EPHESIANS- 41

-ACCEPTED-

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward.” Eph. 3:2.

This time our subject is not the Dispensation of Grace. Neither is it the Dispensation of the Grace of God. But it is the Dispensation of the Grace of God to the Gentiles. Read the verse above again and note that YOU refers back to GENTILES in verse 1.

Of course there are some who would ask why make all that distinction. It is simply because that we must never make the mistake of taking anything incomplete or out of its context. That is the way most error starts. It is not enough to get some idea in our little mind and then go and pick out bits here and there to prove it. If it is not the general trend and teaching of the passage of Scripture in which it is found, then we are very wrong.

Just before the writing of Ephesians, one dispensation of grace had been terminated. It was a dispensation of grace to Israel. It could be divided into 4 or more parts. The following is only suggestive. You may be able to add to or improve it.

1. Dispensation of Promise. Abraham was the steward of this household.

2. Dispensation of Covenant. Moses was the steward of this household. Law was added because of transgressions.

3. Dispensation of the Kingdom of Israel. David (and his line) was the steward of this household.

4. Dispensation of the Kingdom of Heaven. Peter was the steward and carried the keys.

During this last one, from Acts 10 till the last of the book, there is an inner dispensation of grace to the Gentiles. But the Jew was still subject to the law.

Since Acts, when the Salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, and where His own received Him not, there have been 2 dispensations running side by side, just as there were in Acts. Both have to do with a worship in spirit and truth, without rituals and ordinances of men. Each of these two dispensations or households has a steward.

1. Dispensation of Everlasting Life. John is the steward and his message is found in the gospel that bears his name.

2. Dispensation of the Mystery. Paul is the steward and his message is found in the prison epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy. Also written in the same time period are Titus, Philemon, and 1 Timothy.

Now it is in this latter period, the dispensation of the mystery, that Paul speaks of the DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD TO THE GENTILES.

Do not think for a minute that grace began with Abraham. God exhibited His grace when man fell. He made coats for Adam and Eve. No man has ever been saved or received any blessings from the hand of God except thru grace. Man has never deserved or earned anything. It is true that man has had rituals in times past, but they were shadows. Now we have the Substance.

How often we have heard the question, Have you accepted Christ! But is this a proper question? Is it Scriptural? What do we really mean by it? These and other questions should be faced and answered.

When Abel offered up a better sacrifice than his brother, God had respect to it. How? We can only surmise from parallel incidents how it was done. But at least Abel knew for a certainty that his offering was accepted and Cain knew just as well that his was not.

When the first formal offering was made in the new tabernacle, there came a fire from the Lord and consumed it.

When Gideon put his offering on the rock, the angel touched it with a staff and it was burned.

When Manoah put out his offering, the angel did wondrously, i.e., fired the offering and went up with the smoke!

When David made an offering, the Lord answered by fire.

At the dedication of Solomon's temple, the offering was laid on the altar and fire came down and burned it.

When Elijah had his controversy with the priests of Baal, fire came down and burned, not only the offering, but the altar and a great quantity of water.

In all these God showed His acceptance of the offering by sending fire. So we can with some certainty say that it was the same with Abel and his offering.

The one who made the offering according to the Levitical law, was to put his hand on the head of the victim (or to lean on it, as some suggest). This showed that the sinner was depending on the animal as a substitute. The doctrine of substitution was the first doctrine taught to fallen man.

We have here a long list of incidents where God had respect to, or accepted the substitute by sending the fire. The fire consumed the substitute instead of the sinner. That was the lesson. It was pointing to the better Substitute that was to come.

That Substitute did come. He was the Lamb that was offered for you and me. How do we know that the offering was accepted? In that God has raised Him from the dead. He was raised for (or because of) our justification. If we confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus as our substitute, and believe in the heart that God raised Him from the dead, there is salvation. This may be quoted a little out of context, but it is a general truth as well as a dispensational one.

Now you can see the aim of our first question. We do not accept Him; it is God that has done the accepting. All we can do is to believe it and depend on it, or lean on the fact. We are not asked to accept Him, but rather to believe that we are accepted in the Beloved.

If we were to accept, then that would be a work. If it were a work, then it would be an addition to what was already done. So we would be so much as saying that the sacrifice was not sufficient. Let us not take to ourselves any of the prerogatives and glory that belong to God.

## -IN HIS STEPS-

These words are found in 1 Pet. 2:21. In the context are found such expressions as endure grief, suffering wrongfully, buffeted for your faults, take it patiently, suffer, example, reviled not again, threatened not, committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. Somehow all these are involved in the practice of following in His steps.

Now do not be misled by our title. we are not asking WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? as so many have done. That is not the meaning of all this at all. It is what would the Father want me to do. Also there are some sentimentalists who try to follow in the Lord's steps by doing the things He did, even being crucified. But all that avails nothing. We can follow in His steps only so far. We cannot take part in His atoning sacrifice. He was alone in that.

But we do have some words in Gal. 5:22,23 which go with our text very well and can be practically applied today. These things are the fruit of the spirit and are in contrast to the works of the flesh in the verses before. Let us divide them into three groups;

1. GODWARD -- LOVE, JOY, PEACE.
2. MANWARD -- LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS, GOODNESS.
3. SELFWARD -- FAITHFULNESS, MEEKNESS, SELF-CONTROL.

Among all these things, love is put at the head. At one time CHARITY was a word used of love toward God. But in the devolution of language, charity has gone way down the scale. We might say that something was "as cold as charity." That is how we use the word today! But here it is real love toward God. Then follows JOY. Did you know that a person could rejoice and still not be happy? It is true. Even when one has lost loved ones and is not in the least happy, yet he can rejoice in the Lord, even as Job. And when there is real love for God and joy in the heart, then there is PEACE. He is our peace. Peace is the opposite of enmity, and since sins are enmity toward God, forgiven sin and the knowledge of it will bring peace.

It is useless to try to practice the manward graces unless one is first of all right in attitude toward God. Love, joy, and peace in the Godward direction result in LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS, and GOODNESS toward our fellow men. Not only is it our duty to love God before loving our neighbor, it is the logical sequence. All the strife and turmoil in the world today is because men do not love each other, and they cannot love each other because they do not love God.

If right with God and man, then selfward results such as FAITHFULNESS, MEEKNESS, and SELF-CONTROL. Beware of the man who is honest because it is the best policy. He may at any time change his mind and think that dishonesty is the best policy. His faithfulness and honesty must come from a right relationship with God. Following will be MEEKNESS, not pride and boasting. All these work out for SELF-CONTROL. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts. The walk is very important. May all of us be approved unto God.

## -OUR LORD'S TEACHING-

So often we hear of the teaching of Jesus and His philosophy of life that we may be likely to forget what the Scriptures have to say about or quote as to His actual Words.

In Deut. 8:18 a prophet is promised. Jehovah says of him, I WILL PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH, and he shall speak all that I command him. It is evident that this prophet will not be speaking from himself, but have a message given. But what of the record? Did prophets speak from themselves? Did our Lord? What sayeth the Word?

All we will take into consideration in this short space is the gospel of John. There we find 7 references to our subject. These words are spoken between the time of our Lord's baptism and crucifixion.

1. My doctrine is not mine but His that sent Me. 7:16.

2. As My Father hath taught Me I speak these things. 8:28.

3. Why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God heareth God's words. 8:47.

4. The Father which sent Me He gave Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. 12:49.

5. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself. 14:10.

6. The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's, which sent Me. 14:24.

7. I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me. 17:8.

And in 5:24 our Lord said, Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life. You will note the connection here between words and sent.

No one could ever doubt the genuineness of the Lord's claims when he sees the self denial and disclaim for what He had to say. No mere human could ever do that. Pride would creep in somewhere.

But there is more to this. The seal of approval is put upon the prophets. It is written in the prophets they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard cometh unto Me. Not only is the seal of approval on the prophets, but on the Penteteuch, the Psalms, in fact on almost all of the OT as we know it. To Him Abraham was no mythical character or a wandering nomadic tribe personified. To him Jonah was a real person who spent 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish, signifying our Lord's residence in hell. Our Lord never spoke of Isaiah in the plural, but always in the singular. But men who know more than God say that there was more than one Isaiah. Remember that in all these the Lord was speaking nothing but what the Father gave Him to speak.

To deny the truth of any of the OT is to deny the person and work of our Lord, for He testified of all those things. This is Satan's great deception. It is not outside the church in any atheistic societies that the lie is taught, but right in pulpits by those who have sworn to uphold God and His Word. The enemies are within, not without. Somebody is lying. Was it our Lord, or is it our teachers and preachers? But you will have to face that question yourself.

## -A METHOD OF STUDY-

## -BEGINNERS' CORNER- 7

In our schools of the land we hear much of what is called the "Scientific Method." It is a process of study or research in the which all facts available are marshalled together and then, and only then, is a conclusion drawn. It has much to commend it. It is reasonable. It is the one method most likely to arrive at the truth of the matter. No one who has any name in the scientific world would think of hatching up a theory and then picking out phenomena here and there without any relation to prove his point. His colleagues would soon pick him to pieces. But all too often that is the very method used by so-called Bible teachers!

If you would like to try the scientific method for an experiment, just look up some word like SOUL, or DEATH, or some such term. Use the concordance and find every occurrence. Read each one carefully in its context. Take notes. When you have completed the list, make your conclusion. It may be a long way from what tradition says!

Now this concordant method is by no means foolproof. Many errors can creep in. One must also rightly divide as to dispensations. This may mean a reclassifying of the data found. It will be well worth the effort.

But still one may come to a wrong conclusion. Why? Is there a better method?

So far we have been speaking of human reasoning. It is the comparing of fact with fact. It is making use of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam gave up the intuitive knowledge with which he was endowed and at the suggestion of the Devil sought self-improvement thru the knowledge of good and evil. So reason evolved, and everything connected with man's progress (apart from God) from that day to this has been evolution. And because that is so, man has taken it for granted that God's method was also evolution. But just as soon as we get out of man's realm, evolution ceases. There is no evidence of it in God's handiwork. The conclusion then is that evolution is not of God, but of Satan. Search and see!

When God says, "Come, let us reason together," He is asking man to do the only thing he has left as far as mentality is concerned. Man is fairly safe so long as he reasons with God. But when men begin to reason among and with themselves, then watch out!

Now I suppose you are beginning to wonder how one can ever learn truth. There is a way. It is God's way. It is revelation; r-e-v-e-l-a-t-i-o-n. It comes by the Word and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It will give you truth that many, many years of study by the most approved methods will fail to produce. A man can make his boast of how many years of Bible research he has to his credit, and yet he may know absolutely nothing of God's will and purpose.

This ought to be humbling to us all. We are utterly dependent on God for the knowledge we should have. Can we not learn a lesson from Adam?

We should make free use of the Scientific method in our Bible study. It will enable us to uncover much truth. But only God can enlighten our poor, darkened understandings.

Of course it is always possible that Peter made a mistake, as some of my good Christian friends have suggested; that his address to "Ye men of Israel" was in reality an address to all that might hear. If this were true, then it is possible that the other apostles would either correct him or would be proclaiming a gospel contrary to his.

So once again let us turn to our Bible and see "What sayeth the Scriptures."

The next clue we have is in Acts 7 where Stephen full of faith and power did great wonders among the people. When called in question by the council he spake, "Men, brethren and fathers. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran...get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and come into the land which I shall shew thee...and He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on...Yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession and He gave him the covenant of the circumcision."

Then in verse 37 he speaks of Moses "this is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him shall you hear." At verse 53 he concludes, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it...When they (the council) heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."

Now this doesn't appear to be an apostle proclaiming the good news to a group of Gentiles, does it? Like Peter, he is facing certain death to preach to the Jew.

Saul of Tarsus, the next great apostle, enters the scene at Acts 9. Christ appeared to Ananias and said "Go thy way; for he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Then in verse 20 Paul straightway preached Christ in the Synagogue; to the Jew as did others of the dispersion. See 11:19, "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word BUT UNTO THE JEWS ONLY!

This seems highly improbable if Peter had been wrong. Ten years later still preaching to Jews only! News must have traveled slowly in those days (???)

You see how we would abrogate the Word of God when we try to twist it to fit our own ideas and needs. In Matt. 10:5 Christ sent the apostles out with this admonition "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." And now ten years later we find them, preaching to none but Jews only (as they were commanded). Do we have any right then to say, Oh I think the Gentile just wasn't mentioned; he had a right to the blessings of Israel anyway!

As late as Acts 13:16 Paul said "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God...the God of this people of Israel...raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus." When did the Gentiles come in?

## -DO YOU KNOW?-

36. O. When was the middle wall of partition broken down between Jew and Gentile?
- A. In the temple there was a wall beyond which the Gentile dared not go. It was a separation. It was a symbol of the difference between Jew and Gentile in dispensational privileges. All difference was in the flesh. The chief item was the rite of circumcision, but also included were feasts and ordinances. When the nation lost her preeminent position at the end of Acts, then the wall no longer meant anything. Eph. 2:13-22.
37. O. When did all the things which Paul had wherein to boast under the law cease to be of value to him?
- A. Since Jewish distinctions and advantages were in the flesh, Paul could boast of his nationality, his tribe, his membership in the fundamental party, and even his perfection in keeping the law. But when fleshly distinctions were swept aside at the end of Acts, Paul no longer had whereof to boast. Phil. 4:3-16.
38. When was the Jew released from his obligation of observing the Sabbath and the Lord's Supper?
- A. Of course the reader will realize that the Sabbath was given to the Jew as a sign of the covenant. Also he will know that the observance of the Lord's Supper from the time it was introduced in Egypt till now was never allowed by a Gentile or one uncircumcised. When Israel was set aside at Acts 28:28, the covenant was no longer in force, so the Sabbath would no longer mean anything to them. The Passover or Lord's Supper was not only in memory of the deliverance from Egypt, but was also connected with the new covenant and the Lord's coming, both of which were the hope of the Jew. Jer. 31:31. Col. 2:16, 17, 20-23. Cf. John 4:23, 24.
39. O. When was the last time Israel became LO-AMMI (not MY people)?
- A. Many times God's clock has stopped because of failure in the part of Israel. Five such times are recorded in Judges alone. There is a total of 93 years dropped out of God's reckoning. Then came the Babylonian captivity of 70 years, the servitude of 70 yrs., and the desolations of 70 yrs. There are other ones, but not important for our purpose now. The point we make is this; in Acts 28:26, 27 a quotation is made from Isa. 6 for the last time, and the verse following makes it plain that there is where God ceased for the time being to deal with Israel, and His Salvation was sent to the Gentiles.
40. Q. When was salvation taken from the Jews and sent to the Gentiles?
- A. Acts 28:28. This is one of the great turning points in the history of the world. This is the key to the 39 preceding questions. We hope the reader will carefully consider these questions and answers and search and see if they be so.

DEAR FRIENDS; First of all greetings to the new ones receiving this paper for the 1st time. Thanks to many of our good friends, the number of the new ones is much greater than usual.

Transportation conditions have slowed up our shipments of books. A few of Vol. 2 of the Alphabetical Analysis have arrived and have been sent to those who ordered them. Vol. 38 of the Berean Expositor has been sent, but we have received none so far. Copies of the lexicon and Concordance by Bullinger have been received, but in buckram only. Orders are being filled as soon as the books arrive.

In this issue is the last of the series "DO YOU KNOW?" We have distributed over 5000 of these questions in tract form and the supply is exhausted. We still have the plates and hope to reprint the tract in a few days. Our tracts are free.

From time to time friends from far and near have dropped in to visit us and for a discussion of the Word. We welcome such visits. They are mutually helpful. We get ideas for future articles from questions folks may have.

Nine years ago April 4th was the first meeting of the class Truth For Today at the home of your editor. It was the first Sunday in the month. In the following July appeared the 1st issue of the magazine TFT. Little did we think then that our testimony would go to the ends of the earth. Over 2100 on the mailing list now. It is sent free to anyone anywhere. Send us a list of friends who might be interested in it.

Send for your free catalog of Berean Publications. The booklet, Signs of the Times by Welch, might interest you. It is 25¢. Also his booklet, Wisdom, Human and Divine, is well worth reading. It is 30¢

We still have a complete stock of the Companion Bibles. In Buckram \$12; quarter leather \$16; full leather \$24. In India paper we have it with cloth boards at \$18; and in the fine overlapping Morocco leather at \$28. This latter one is fine for carrying with you.

Thanks a lot for the prayers and the gifts which have enabled us to carry on.

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