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The Epistle to Ephesians (Part 1) (Nov 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 11, Nov 1964.

This detailed exposition of Paul's Ephesian letter by our deceased brother John Reid was entrusted to us by his son. We appreciate this honour.

The manuscript represents a meticulous effort to ascertain and present the true meaning of this part of Holy Scripture.

Much profit is to be derived from a prayerful and thoughtful perusal of each article. If all the articles are kept, they will provide a splendid running commentary on the entire epistle.

When the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus the first time, he seemed to find an unusual opening for the Word of God in the synagogue of that city. After he there had "reasoned with the Jews," they "desired him to tarry longer time with them." This indicated an interest among his brethren according to the flesh such as he had often sought with tears, but in vain. However, we are informed that "he consented not," but said: "I will return again unto you, if God will."

Of course, we know that when he set sail from Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, his objective was Syria (Acts 18:18), although that of his companions was Ephesus. Therefore he "left them there," but "he himself (temporarily) entered into the synagogue (in Ephesus) and reasoned with the Jews." There he availed himself of an

opportunity during the vessel's stay in the port of Ephesus, intending to continue the journey to Syria when the vessel resumed her voyage.

The reason he gave for not remaining longer with the interested Jews was: "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem." We are aware that this explanation is omitted from some of the oldest versions, but there appears to be no other reason to explain the refusal of what seems to have been an exceptional opportunity among the Jews.

In the meantime, a certain Jew named Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures" had arrived in the city and spoken "boldly in the synagogue" although "knowing only the baptism of John." Aquila and Priscilla, now resident in Ephesus, being impressed with his message, "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." In due course this minister of the Gospel departed for Greece where he "mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:24-28). The city of Corinth seems to have been the centre of his labours (Acts 19:1).

Paul at Ephesus

When Paul returned to Ephesus as promised he found there twelve men, disciples who had been baptized only "unto John's baptism," and were unaware that the Holy Ghost was, that this, His day, had come. See John 7:39. The reading here without the italics, "The Holy Ghost was not yet," is correct. These disciples then, after instruction in the truth and upon receiving Christian baptism, became the nucleus of one of the most outstanding examples of the Apostle's work among the

Gentiles, and this in a city literally submerged in the grossest forms of idolatry. Paul continued there three years (Acts 19:10; 19, 31). This great work was almost entirely among the Gentiles.

However, at last, after the work of several years in many places, we find him on his last journey to Jerusalem. On the way he sends a request to the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him at Miletus, about a day's journey from their city. Here he gave them very salutary counsel. It is noticeable that while he warned them that after his departure grievous wolves would find entrance among them, not sparing the flock, there was no such notion suggested as "apostolic succession." On the contrary, he said: "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

There are, however, many who, not satisfied with their divine safeguard, have much to say about an equal authority of "tradition;" but this is transgressing "the commandment of God." See Matthew 15:3.

The Apostle a Prisoner

Four years had elapsed since the farewell at Miletus. Shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem he had been attacked by the Jews but rescued by Claudias Lysias, captain of the Roman guard, under whose custody he was kept pending investigation of his behaviour. In Caesarea, an asylum safer than Jerusalem, he appealed to Caesar to avoid a plot against his life (Acts 25:9-12). The appeal being recognized, in due time with a number of "prisoners," he was placed upon a ship for Rome, in the charge of a centurion "of Augustus' band."

Paul in Italy

At last he arrived in Italy, and was met by a group from the church in Rome. The brethren came “as far as Appii forum.” In that group there was no apostle, nor, so far as the holy records are concerned, was there an apostle’s name on the list of the visiting comforters who saw him during confinement. Furthermore there is not a word to suggest that another apostle had ever resided in Rome. For such information we have to go to “tradition.” As to that, however, Dr. L. H. Lehmann, formerly “Priest by the rite of Rome,” tells us in his account of “The Soul of a Priest,” that as a student in Rome, his teacher of archaeology, Professor Marucchi, a co-worker with the great archeologist Di Rossi, related that “for fifty years his greatest ambition had been to unearth in Rome some inscription which would verify the papal claim that the Apostle Peter actually had been in Rome. Pope Leo XIII had solemnly promised, should he succeed in bringing to light such an inscription, that, layman and married though he was, he would reward him by making him a cardinal. “The professor,” states Dr. Lehmann, “was forced to admit to us that he had given up hope of success in his search.”

We can, therefore, see the wisdom of God in the Bible representation to us of the Roman assembly in existence independent of apostolic founding. The Epistle to the Romans was penned by an apostle who, at the time of writing had never seen Rome, and who, when he did arrive there did so a prisoner.

Paul’s Prison Letters

Four of them were written during his first imprisonment in Rome; three during an interval of liberty (Acts

28:30-31); and one during his last imprisonment said to be in the Mamertine dungeon.

The four were: the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, and Philemon. The first two were carried by Tychicus, the last one by Omesimus, a repentant run-away slave. Paul desired the letter to Colosse, forwarded to the Church of the Laodiceans, and that the Colossians would “read the Epistle from Laodicea.” (This may have been the Ephesian Epistle forwarded to Laodicea). Apparently Paul regarded the Epistles to Ephesus and to Colosse as of a nature which might be serviceable as circular epistles among the three churches named. The Philippian letter was carried by Epaphroditus on his return from Rome (Phil. 2:25-30).

Those epistles which were written during the interval of liberty were Hebrews, Titus, and Timothy. Hebrews was written from Italy, Paul mentioning that Timothy had been “set at liberty,” with whom he shortly expected to visit the Hebrews. This is the only Pauline epistle to that people, an epistle authoritative as “the other Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The letter to Titus concerns a work in Crete for which there appears to be no room in the book of the Acts. This evidently was a work wrought after the Apostle’s release from prison. In the first Epistle to Timothy we learn that Paul besought him to “abide still at Ephesus” while he (Paul) passed on to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). Thus the desire expressed in Italy to visit the saints with Timothy was realized.

The second Epistle to Timothy was written during the Apostle’s final imprisonment. It is the last letter from his hands of which there is evidence. History tells us that

shortly after writing it he was beheaded under Nero. As a Roman citizen he would not be crucified. That noble witness for Christ thus closed his testimony. Long before this Ananias of Damascus had been informed by Christ of His servant's prospective career in these memorable words: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Paul's Letter to Ephesus

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians gives the fullest revelation of "the mystery" that had been hid in God throughout the ages, but "now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." In his Roman Epistle this is alluded to (Rom. 16:25-26), and again more fully in the Corinthian Epistle, in both cases, however, chiefly in its practical bearing upon certain matters (1 Cor. 14:12-21). After a long and arduous life, he writes about it from prison, with a fulness not found elsewhere in Scripture. It may be helpful to state that in writing to the Colossians he informs them that he had two ministries committed to him; he was a minister of the Gospel, which they had heard and which had been preached to every creature under Heaven; and a minister to complete the Word of God (as to its subjects). This he did in the revelation of "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. 1:23-26). The latter ministry is in large part the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians, an Epistle giving us, as another has said, "The richest exposition of the blessings of the saints individually and of the assembly, setting forth at the same time the counsels of God with regard to the glory of Christ."

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 2) (Dec 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 12, Dec 1964.

Spiritual Blessings And Divine Purpose — Chapter 1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1-2).

Greetings: God had willed that the Apostle Paul should proclaim His grace to the whole creation under Heaven, and make known His purpose to the saints. Therefore, when on a mission of wrath against the Christians, in which he thought he was doing God's service, he was rescued from that evil purpose by Jesus Christ, to become His apostle. As such he now writes to the Ephesians whom he addresses as "the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" (New Tran.). As to the word "faithful" the following remark is enlightening: "The word translated "faithful" might be rendered "believers." It is used as a term of superscription both here and in the Epistle to the Colossians. We must remember that the Apostle was now in prison, and that Christianity which had been established for some years, was exposed to all kinds of attack. To say that one was a believer at the beginning of the Church era was to say that he was faithful. The word then does not merely express that they believed or that each individual walked faithfully, but that the Apostle addressed himself to those who by grace faithfully maintained the faith they received" (Darby).

To these then, sanctified in Christ Jesus, the divine good wishes are now conveyed: “Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Such a greeting given to saints already conscious of standing in grace, and in peace, expressed the divine desire for their continued and further enjoyment of these blessings.

Every Spiritual Blessing

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (1:3-8).

In contemplating what he is about to unfold, the Apostle cannot contain himself, but breaks out in adoration. Unlike Old Testament introductions to Israel as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” which called attention to God’s ways with the patriarchs, He is now introduced as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It has been pointed out by another that the phrase “God… of our Lord Jesus Christ” recognizes the position Christ took as Man before God, God regarded in His nature as such, while the expression “Father of our Lord Jesus ‘Christ” suggests how Christ is looked at as the

Son of the Father's love. However, let us remember that as the "Only Begotten" He is unique, the Son ever with the Father who in time sent Him "into the world" (John 10:36). He is also presented in Scripture as the Son of God born in time (Psa. 2:7; Luke 1:35), and as such He associates us with Himself in sonship. Even as such, however, He is the "Firstborn," in His preeminence. Hence, in the message to the disciples by Mary Magdalene, our Lord says: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." He does not say, to our Father and to our God: He preserves, as a matter of necessity, the peculiar place that is His, and yet He brings us, by virtue of what He is, into relationships which are characterized by His relationships, "My Father" and therefore "your Father"; "My God" and therefore "your God" (Numerical Bible).

Every Spiritual Blessing: This is the text which describes the blessings known in Christianity as distinguished from those in Judaism. We are blessed with "every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ." Consequently, while there are distinctive blessings known in the Church which are not for the enjoyment of other saints of God, "every" blessing which is "spiritual" is the portion of the Church. These blessings are "in heavenly places in Christ," the One in whom there we are seated (2:6).

As we consider these things, it is well to remember that the Ephesians were in a condition to appropriate the teaching of this Epistle, for we know that the Apostle adapted his ministry to the capacity of his audiences. He informed the Corinthians of this when he said: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed

you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet are ye able" (1 Cor. 3:2). Nevertheless, it is solemn that even in Ephesus before the Apostle's death, there had been declension (2 Tim. 1:15), and thirty years later had to be reproved in these words: "Thou hast left thy first love." The word "first" is in the sense of quality, and the same as the adjective in Luke 15: "Bring forth the best robe." We sometimes speak as if "first love" was a term describing the love of a "convert," and as if that was the best period in Christian experience. Well, it is true that the simplicity and warmth of a young convert is very blessed and that it is sad when it gives place to dullness and coldness. Alas! there are cases indeed, where the period of conversion is the brightest! Are we to believe that the longer we know the Lord, the less we shall respond to His love? Far be the thought! On the contrary, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Pro. 4:18). The young convert has been likened to a rivulet high in the mountains, leaping from crag to crag, running swiftly here, slowly there, singing and dancing on its way — a beautiful sight and sound. Later it reaches the valley and becomes a river, deep and flowing irresistibly on its steady course, the promoter of fertility and commerce.

What we find in Ephesus — "object of desire" — is departure of heart in a church which, while retaining many commendable qualities, had departed from first love, from "full satisfaction with the object" of the heart. Let us remember that in the matter of spiritual values, when the best is lost, the remainder will gradually disappear. How suggestive then that in the record of Church declension, what might be regarded as the most

prosperous of churches is first on the list of downgrade! Does it not reveal the craftiness of the enemy in making the attack upon the best first of all? May it teach us to appreciate the gifts of love, but above all the Lover Himself.

A story has been told regarding a son of C. H. Mackintosh, who, with a school problem, came to his father.

The father only too gladly gave him the necessary assistance to work it out satisfactorily. Some time later the lad returned to the room; whereupon the father said, “Well, son, what can I do for you now?” To which the boy replied, “Nothing father, I just wanted to be with you!” Yes! lovely experiences like this do take place in human families! But alas! is it not true that very much of our intercourse with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is in the nature of seeking benefits? Seldom do we approach Him just to enjoy personal contact with God because of the exceeding grace of His presence and company.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 3) (Jan 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 1, Jan 1965.

Spiritual Blessings And Divine Purpose — Chapter I

Chosen in Christ. The spiritual blessings we have been alluding to were the subject of divine counsel before the world was made; therefore Christians belong to Eternity. Manifestly, then, they are to be a people according to the desire of God; they are to be “holy and without blame before Him in love;” a people who are like Him who chose them; of whom it has been well said: “He is holy in character, unblamable in all His ways, love is His nature.”

Sonship. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children (unto sonship) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” The elect have been marked out by the Father in order to furnish Him with satisfaction. They are said to have been brought into such a relationship “to Himself.” This excess of language is intended to emphasize His fatherly desires “according to the good pleasure of His will.” It gave Him pleasure to do so, therfore He effected it.

The Glory of His Grace. His action in securing sons was manifestly “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” This glory is really the outshining of His disposition in grace that was inherent in His nature, and which, therefore, had a place in His counsels before sin found entrance into this world. As we learn this we are attracted to its source and have our hearts filled with praise. No

wonder! His grace is so great that He “hath made us accepted in the Beloved;” He has taken us into such favour that His affections for the Son rest upon us.

The Riches of His Grace. As we have been seeing, the Fall of man did not take God by surprise nor find Him without adequate resource to deal with mankind in the predicament into which he had fallen. There was varied quality in His grace, that could be adapted to any condition resulting from sin. Therefore God drew upon His resource, His “riches.” His resource was Christ. We may say then that as grace was inherent in the nature of God, the necessity for its expression further revealed that redemption was inherent in that grace. As the subjects of it we can say that we have been redeemed in order that we may be an everlasting possession through the blood of Him in whom we have been taken into favour, all unfitness having been removed.

The Mystery Of God’s Will

“Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of

the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (1:9-14).

The Administration of All Things. As those informed that He who chose us for His pleasure had a purpose in His mind, He now assumes that we will be interested to know what that purpose is. This is now disclosed. It is a purpose to celebrate the fame, to manifest the glory, of the One who affected the divine will, laying the foundation upon which all will be built. We are told that the administration of the fulness of times is committed to Him; that under Him God will gather together or unite all things, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth. Beings "under the earth," in the infernal regions, have no place in this, even though they will be compelled to bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). But in the day we are contemplating, it will be seen that God had a purpose, the fulfilment of which would manifest Christ as the supreme Ruler of a universe of blessing, a vast universe of things in Heaven and earth. This will be the result in government toward which the ways of God have been tending.

This is not the eternal state. But when every detail of beneficent rule has been carried out by Christ, He, the Son (the Man of Psalm 8), will turn the kingdom over to the Father (who had put all things under Him) in order that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:25-28). The mediatorial kingdom is thus absorbed in the supremacy which belongs to God, in which the eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit function for Eternity.

Jewish Believers. Returning, however, to the mediatorial kingdom in Heaven and upon earth, we observe that it is

the divine will that the inheritance which the Son inherits will be shared by those who are His. He is the One “in whom” they will obtain it. It is not that He gives it away, but will share it with them as coheirs. Those coming into this inheritance, described as “We… who first trusted in Christ,” are those Israelites who trusted in Him prior to the Gentiles. It is believed however that the Spirit further emphasizes this priority as indicating the faith that believed in Christ without waiting for His manifestation as King (when Thomas-like Israel will believe). A rendering of the text, which is almost an exposition, is: “We… who have pre-trusted in the Christ.” The Apostle Paul seems to speak of himself in this way “as one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8), an “abortive,” one prematurely born. These, then, marked out as associates with the Son of God in government, will celebrate His glory during that great and very able assertion of the divine rights in government.

Gentile Believers. The Apostle now changes his terms from “we” to ye, saying: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed (having believed) ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” In this way God put upon the Gentiles the mark of distinction which He had put upon converted Jews. It was by explaining to his fellow-Jews that God had given the Spirit to the Gentiles in Caesarea, that the Apostle Peter convinced them he did right in associating and eating with them, saying: “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He

did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17).

The Earnest Of Our Inheritance. Regarding this, language is used that includes Jews and Gentiles. The expression "the earnest of our inheritance" is employed as including both. Regarding believers as such, the Apostle says the Holy Spirit "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased, possession, unto the praise of His glory." In this way it is shown that the Holy Spirit who, as a seal distinguishes the people of God from those who are not, is also an earnest who furnishes a foretaste as a pledge in part and beforehand of what is to follow, even of what we shall enter upon at "the redemption of the purchased possession" when it is taken over publicly before every eye. The foretaste referred to may be learned in the following words: "Eye hath not seen neither ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). We know that the "eye" is capable of viewing beautiful sights, the "ear" of hearing lovely sounds, and the "heart" of entertaining great conceptions. With the "eye" the present writer saw trees well over three hundred feet high with trunks over twenty-eight feet in diameter. In the home of a friend, when a record was put in a Victrola, his "ear" listened to the rich tones of the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso. The conception in the "heart" of James Watt as he watched steam lifting the lid of his mother's kettle, gave the impression that led to the building of the locomotive. Wonderful things find entrance into the human heart.

But “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, can only be revealed by the Spirit. He is the earnest. This has been well illustrated in the experience of the children of Israel, who had so often spoken skeptically of the promised land. It was really they who had suggested the idea of sending spies to search out the inheritance and to make a report of their findings (Deut. 1:22). Although Moses was “pleased” to accomodate them in the matter, and God graciously authorized it, such was not the original intention.

In result, upon their return to the camp, the spies brought pomegranates, figs, and “one cluster of grapes, which they bore between two on a staff” (Num. 13). These fruits were an “earnest” brought from the Land of Promise, a land flowing with milk and honey. If any enquired as to the inheritance they were traveling to, here was the answer in tangible form, here was the earnest.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 4) (Feb 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 2, Feb 1965.

Spiritual Blessings And Divine Purpose — Chapter 1

The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. The Apostle's prayer shows how he realized that the Ephesians needed divine help if they were to know and be affected by the things God had for them. One of his requests was that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father (source) of glory, who had purposed these blessings for them, and made it possible to grant them, would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of their understanding (heart) being enlightened. Such a request lets us know that the mere knowledge of terms will not suffice to bring us into "the full-knowledge of God" (for full-knowledge is the word here), God revealed in the grace of His heart and in the counsels of Eternity. For this the eyes of our "heart" have to be opened; the eyes of the very citadel of our being, whence are "the issues of life." And we may be sure that God would readily grant His people what the Apostle prayed for, there being no hindrance on His part. Any hindrance must come from ourselves. How often we let earthly things fill our vision, taking away the desire for an appreciation of heavenly things! Someone has said that in this way we really "connive" at what deprives us of the full-knowledge of God," the knowledge that builds up and never puffs up.

The Hope Of His Calling. Such a hope implies that we are to know the attractiveness of what we have been

called to in the Gospel. This is shown in another way by the Apostle Peter. He tells us that God “has called us by glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3 Margin), the glory attracting us where Christ is, this being accompanied by “virtue” (the soldier’s virtue), the courage that supports us as we respond to the heavenly call. The calling is variously styled. It is taught that we have part in a “heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1); Paul telling the Ephesians that it is “your calling” (Eph. 4:4); as well as that it is “His calling” (1:18), for God is the source of it. The “hope” of it is to be with Christ in Heaven. This will involve present exercise of heart as to the “things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1), the things we should “seek” to know better every day.

His Inheritance and Ours. The inheritance belongs to God, but He inherits it “in the saints” (1:18). This statement is not suggesting that the saints are His inheritance. We may find an example of the thought expressed if we remember that of old God had said to Israel: “The land is Mine” (Lev. 25:23), but He took possession of it in His people whom he authorized to go in and take hold of it. As to the inheritance of “all things in Heaven and on earth” we known that Christ inherits it as Creator, but on that basis we could have no part in it. However, it has become “the purchased possession” (1:14), which He is going to take over in great power at the appointed time; He will do so as Kinsman-Redeemer. On that basis we can and will possess it as co-heirs with Him. God has devised this way of putting us in possession of it, as fellow-heirs with His Son, thus exemplifying His tender words: “Not as

the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27), words which the poet interprets thus:

"That love that gives not as the world, but shares

All it possesses with its loved coheirs."

In the meantime He has ascended "far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (4:10) with His glory, even His own workmanship, all of it revealing His skilful hand in ways descriptive of His character.

The Exceeding Greatness of Divine Power. The power which God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," is really the surpassing greatness of "His power to us-ward who believe," power that has wrought in us, and has given us the place that is ours in Christ. Thus we know Christ in exaltation, the One under whose feet God "hath put all things". His position at the right hand of God proclaims Him as the Ruler of the universe. But His triumphant session in glory involves details to be worked out and made visible to sight and sense. For it is written: "But now we see not yet all things put under Him" (Heb. 2:8), language that implies that we shall in due time "see" the things under His government. Nevertheless it is added: "But we see Jesus… crowned with glory and honour" (V. 9). That is our vision of Him by faith, as we envision Him in heavenly exaltation. As such God "gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Thus as Head He associates the Church with Himself, and in the day of His administration of all things, as His body and fulness,

she will be found adequate to express His mind and effect His will. Today she occupies that position in testimony to what is unseen, as truly as in that day she will function suitably during His visible reign.

Learning Christ

To learn of Christ implies what all learning does, growth, the making of mistakes and the correcting of them. It implies a strong, even although slow progress upward toward an ideal as that is personified in the Lord Jesus.

To subscribe to the truth that Christ is the central figure of all history, the divider of the eras; to accept Him as the embodiment of all virtue; to agree that He was the ideal man, the perfect moralist, commits no one to anything. To believe that Jesus Christ is Lord of both the dead and the living (Rom. 14:9) requires an unreserved commitment to all He teaches and an unhesitant submission to all He claims.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 5) (Mar 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 3, Mar 1965.

How God Formed The Assembly — Chapter II

Conditions among Gentiles. We Gentiles were formerly dead toward God, being alienated from His life. False gods had supplanted in our hearts the place that properly belonged to Him. And the enemy had provided for us a system of things called “the world,” a system of lust (1 John 2:15-17). To this we were very much alive, although dead to God. Lurking in this system was Satan, its god, who catered to our lusts, and thus controlled us. Another description of him is that of “The prince of the power of the air,” an expression which describes a ruler in a position of vantage, exercising influence over the earth, an influence which the heavens properly have for fruitfulness and blessing, but which he uses for an evil purpose. However, as he cannot get at God in a direct way, he brings in disturbance through man whom he has seduced; for he is the spirit “that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Having lured mankind into lawlessness in respect of God, he operates in him in ways that express most effectively his hostility to God. Heathendom was a monument of this.

Conditions among Jews. Although not debased in gross filthiness like the heathen, the Apostle confesses that “we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,” besides we must remember there were periods when they exhibited

grossness beyond that of the Amorites (2 Kin. 21: 11). It is true that in an outward and national way they occupied the place of sonship (Ex. 4:22), but spiritually they were untrue to such a relationship. Not being born of God, many were fundamentally like the Gentiles, being controlled by lust, and therefore doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do. Consequently, despite very many great advantages over the Gentiles, they were demonstrated to be no better than the heathen; they were “by nature” the children of wrath, even as others. Such were subject to judgment as were the Gentiles. But God interposed for them in Christ, even as He has done for us Gentiles.

The Riches of God in Mercy. Mercy did not come into existence by the fall of man, it was always resident in God, it was part of His abounding riches. He was “rich in mercy.” However, sin having come in, He hath shut up together in their unbelief both Jews and Gentiles “that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32); but this is the present exercise of mercy toward those in “unbelief,” mercy in which He was rich before the foundation of the world. It found expression among us when “dead in sins,” and incapable of making a move toward Him; it has “quickened us together with Christ,” and made us live unto God. He “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Actually, of course, we are upon earth in bodies not yet adapted to Heaven. But as those who have life in Christ, as those who are united to Him by the Spirit, our position in Him is now set forth representatively, and the apprehension of this would make it effective in us as a heavenly people upon earth.

By and by we shall be with Him in bodies of glory through Eternity.

Future Display. In coming ages God is going to exhibit before the entire universe the surpassing riches of “His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” But we know already what will be manifested then before all. We have present realization of the grace that intervened for our salvation from the bondage of sin in its manifold expression. We can say that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God “not of works lest any man should boast.” So far as works are concerned in this matter, the worker is God. But He has wrought in order that we may become workers like Himself. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” All of God’s children may be such workers, independent of circumstances. It is told of a poor woman who loved the Lord and served Him meekly in trying circumstances, that when dying she regretted that she had not more to show the Lord when she met Him face to face. “Mother” sobbed the daughter, “show Him your fingers!” Yes, they were calloused with labour uncomplainingly performed, the work so necessary in the place where the providence of God had set her. Her light was shining in a lowly sphere as she prayed and toiled. But we could have told that sobbing daughter: “My dear, your mother will not need to show Him her fingers, He saw them long ago, heard her prayers, and appreciated her uncomplaining testimony to the grace that supported her in her burdens. He is the One who accredited the widow as the greatest contributor to the treasury in the House of God, He is the One who said of a woman: “She hath done

what she could!” That is very far more than can be said of many of us. We may safely trust Him to appraise the value of whatever is done, and say:

“If we cannot be the watchman,

Standing high on Zion’s wall,

Pointing out the path to Heaven,

Offering life and peace to all;

With our prayers and with our bounties

We can do what Heaven demands,

We can be like helpful Aaron,

Holding up the prophet’s hands.”

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 6) (Apr 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 4, Apr 1965.

One New Man

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made with hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:11-18).

We Gentiles were outside the religion signified by the rite of circumcision. This, however in Israel had degenerated into a mere cutting “made with hands,” and devoid of spiritual meaning. Hence, Paul describes its votaries as the “concision,” using an expression of contempt that means “mutilators of the flesh” (See Phil. 3:2). In his day they were in active opposition to the

gospel and all who obeyed it. For the gospel showed that the believer was “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of (the sins of) the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11). Therefore, Christians can say: “Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin (sin in its totality) might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). Formerly we were (1) “without Christ” for the Messiah was Israel’s (2); “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” outside the pale of privilege (3); “strangers from the covenants of promise,” lacking covenant relations with God (4); therefore without “hope” seeing we were (5) “without God in the world:” worshippers of idols.

The Distance Removed. “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” They had been brought to God. Moreover, the partition separating them from the Jews had been removed in the death of Christ, who “made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Thus, “He is our peace” not only as making us nigh to God by His blood, but also in “making both one,” by removing the enmity that formerly existed between two parties. How He did this we shall see.

The Enmity Abolished. We are told that Christ “abolished in His flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” By His death the cause of enmity between Jew and Gentile, even the ritualistic system under the law, has been ended. This was involved in the fact that both Jew and Gentile according to the flesh had been judicially terminated at the cross, so that as such neither have any status before God. Instead of there being two at enmity with each

other, both have been set aside; Christ has made “in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace;” the one new man being Christ the Head and His body the Church, elsewhere described as the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). There could have been no peace otherwise.

Reconciliation. “And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” The term “reconciliation” could not have been used of the “one new man,” seeing this includes the Head even Christ, but it is used in reference to “both” (Jew and Gentile) of a former day now formed into “one body” in the way already described. This is new creation, all contrariety having been ended. The “enmity” that existed has been “slain” at the cross by the judicial ending of man according to the flesh. Where there had been contrariety, God finds that in which He has complacence.

Preaching Peace. Furthermore, says the Apostle, “Christ came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh;” to the Gentile afar off in the darkness of idolatry, and to the Jew dispensationally nigh in outward and national relations with God. These latter were “even as others” (the Gentiles), being “children of wrath.” But He who made peace preached it to both concerned. This peace involved nearness to God, as well as to each other, for “Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,” those formerly at enmity now approach the same Father by “one Spirit.”

We learn, however, from other Scriptures that there had been a practical denial of this “peace.” For the Apostle Peter on a visit to Antioch, having eaten with the Gentile converts there, had separated from them on the arrival

of some “from James.” Fearing the Circumcision he, several others, and even Barnabas were carried away with “the dissimulation.” But Paul, true to the “peace” proclaimed by Christ, openly reproved Peter who was blameable for he knew better (Acts 10-11), but had been ensnared by the fear of man. However, Paul saved the situation on that occasion.

The Dwelling Place of God

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 7) (May 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 5, May 1965.

John R. Reid

The Household of God. The Gentiles now enjoy with their brethren of Jewish origin a fellowship exceeding in scope and intimacy anything ever known in Israel. They are no longer “strangers from the covenant of promise,” but subjects of the grace set forth in the ministry of the new covenant. Consequently, they are not aliens from any whom God owns as His people; they are “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,” enjoying the privileges of those whom God has distinguished from the world by setting them apart for a holy purpose. As such their citizenship is in Heaven even although they are actually upon the earth. As God’s household they are built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” the foundation built by their ministry of Christ. As the “Chief Corner Stone” Jesus Christ unites in Himself, as it were, the two sides of the building, — the Jew and the Gentile: “He is the foundation of the whole” (Grant). “The building fitly framed together” is constructed of living stones; as “living” they have derived life from Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), and thus are suitable material for the structure which He builds.

The Body referred to earlier, and the Building under present consideration, are two descriptions of the Church, and are closely related. The former is adequate to express the mind of Christ the Head, the latter to

maintain the truth as a practical witness to the character of God.

Christians must behave in a manner suitable to Him who dwells therein (1 Tim. 3:3-15). The close relation between these two aspects of the Church is seen in the fact that our Lord's "body" is called the temple of God; and the body of the believer is called the temple of the Holy Spirit (John 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:19). However, in the view of this structure as a "holy temple" in the Lord, it is said to be growing toward completion. Nevertheless, at this present time God has His habitation wherein He dwells by the Spirit. It may be that as this "holy temple", the Church, is regarded as complete in glory, whereas in its present character as the "habitation of God" it is seen in its tabernacle character upon the earth.

Administration Of The Mystery (Chapter III)

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:1-8).

Qualification for this Ministry. The Apostle reminded the Gentiles that he was in bonds for them; he suffered severely because of the nature of the work given him to do. To be sure the other apostles suffered for Christ's sake as well as Paul; but to him was added a special and most persistent persecution from his own countrymen because of his labours among the Uncircumcision, for he was followed from city to city by antagonists who made his work very difficult. We learn that after the attack upon him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-22:23) by a murderous mob (from which he was rescued by the chief captain of the Roman guard), when permitted to address his assailants, they listened until he arrived at that stage of his address where he related that while he hoped to reach his fellow-countrymen with the gospel, Christ warned him that they would refuse him an audience, saying: "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:14-21). Then they shouted: "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live!" Enraged, they cried out, cast off their clothes, and threw dust in the air. Such was the treatment of Paul from his own countrymen because of his zeal in carrying out the commandment of the Lord in going to the Gentiles with the gospel.

But if we go back to the time of his conversion we learn how he received the impulse of his ministry, as he listened to the appeal: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9:4). Thus he learned that those he persecuted comprised the Body of Christ, and the Head suffered in the members. Hence, in an unforgetable way, at the very start of his new career, the truth of the "mystery" was impressed upon him. In the phrase "As I wrote afore in few words," the Apostle alludes to a

former writing in which he had briefly reminded them that a special training qualified him to minister this truth. Statements as to the mystery are found in his Roman and Corinthian Epistles, but these do not seem to be what he refers to, seeing he is not alluding to the message, but to his qualifications for making it known. Some have thought he means the Galatian Epistle as showing the character of his call and the accompanying impressions fitting him for the work to be undertaken. However, it does not say that he alone received this truth, but that the Spirit had revealed it to the holy apostles and prophets of Christ.

The Mystery. What is the mystery? It is “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same Body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.” A distinction between Israel and the nations had no place in this mystery, for it was in the nature of new creation. Those known as Gentiles were now members of “the same Body” as those formerly known as Jews who, on becoming Christians, were fellowmembers with them. Christ was the Head of this Body. He had made in Himself of two “one new man.” But this could never have been accomplished had not God intervened to make both jointly “partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Gal. 3:8), a gospel addressed to all mankind. That was the first necessary move toward the scheme of things described.

Grace in Choice of Paul. While there was a God-given suitability in the vessel of testimony selected for this ministry; nevertheless, we are to see in it peculiar grace. He is careful in a personal way to remind us that he was “less than the least of all saints,” and that it was by grace to him and continually working in him that he was

maintained in the spiritual competency for the work that was necessary, even, as he says: “That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God.” There had come to light a purpose carried out according to resources which God ever had in His Son, even “unsearchable riches.”

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory” (3:9-13).

Witnessed by Angels. The Apostle laboured to make all see the truth of the mystery in its practical demonstration in this world, so that all might observe what God had in His mind before the foundation of the world. Moreover, God had ordained that “principalities and powers” would learn by observation in the Church “the manifold wisdom of God.” A striking part of the mystery of godliness is couched in these words: “He was seen of angels” (1 Tim. 3:16). When Christ was born these heavenly beings celebrated His birth. We find them attending to His need after the temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11); one of them “strengthening Him” in Gethsemane; they were on hand, attending to His interests “where the body of Jesus had lain.” And although in John’s Gospel, He says: “I ascend,” as having

in Himself the power to do so, we do not forget that Luke tells us He was “carried up into Heaven” (Luke 24:41), no doubt in great honour, by His servants the angels. Now they behold in the Church the “manifold,” the all-varied, wisdom of God, exceeding the utmost conceptions of the creature. They begin to understand that by incarnation, redemption, resurrection, and ascension, and by the descent of the Holy Spirit, God has secured a people from every wing of the human family to be the reproduction in character of His Son, as being His Body and therefore adequate for this purpose, so that by “principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by (means of) the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” What wisdom on the part of God, and what triumph on the part of the One who suffered to bring it to pass! This is the One “in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.”

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 8) (June-July 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 6, June-July 1965.

John R. Reid

On Bowed Knees

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole (every) family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (3:14-21).

In the earlier prayer (Chapter one) there is no mention of the bodily posture of the Apostle, although there is no reason to suppose that he did not “bow” his knees on that occasion, as well as on this one. Here, however, it is very purposely mentioned to impress upon the saints the intensely sympathetic frame of mind accompanying his request for them, and the deep realization he had of the necessity of a divine intervention on their behalf by a subjective work in them.

The prayer is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in Heaven and earth is named, each family named as expressive of certain qualities known to the Father. There was the early family of the antedeluvians; of Job, Abraham, Melchisedec, and others unnamed, and that of Israel. There is now the Church; there will be in the future the sealed of every tribe in Israel, and the unnumbered out of every nation. "Under the name of Jehovah there were only the Jews. You only have I known of all the families of the earth (Amos 3:2).... But under the name of the Father of Jesus Christ all families — the assembly, angels, Jews, Gentiles, all — range themselves. All the ways of God in that which He has arranged for His glory were co-ordained under that name, and were in relation with it" (Darby).

The prayer is that the Ephesians would be "strengthened by might in the inner man," by the Father's Spirit, so that the unseen Christ might have His place in their hearts, and they "rooted and grounded in love;" "the eyes of their hearts apprehending with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth and height." It is not defined of what, it being understood that we will see it refers to the subject of testimony heretofore considered, even the range of divine counsels. Some have noted that Abraham, at the very centre of his inheritance, was told, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward" (Gen. 13:14); but nothing was said about "depth and height" as is said to us. For "the breadth of His work includes all His creatures. The length of it is from Eternity to Eternity. The depth of it could only be rightly known by that depth

to which Christ has descended for us; and the height by that place which He has given us with Himself" (Numerical Bible). But in the contemplation of this, the stay of our hearts is the knowledge of the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge," love immeasurable. Thus are we filled "unto the fulness of God," as another has said: Like a basket floating in the immensity of the ocean, "filled" with the ocean, but unable to contain it all.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The request had been presented by one who was filled with confidence in the power and beneficence of the Father, One who was able "to do exceeding abundantly" according to "power that worketh in us," a power at work in the Ephesians, increasingly, he believed. Thus does the Father furnish glory to Himself in the Church by Christ Jesus now and through eternity.

Walking Worthy Of Our Calling (Chapter IV)

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (4:1-6).

Our Heavenly Vocation. "The vocation wherewith we are called" is really "our heavenly calling", it denotes our

heavenly portion in Christ Jesus; it is the “calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.” As a heavenly people we are called upon to walk as those whose interests are connected with a heavenly Christ. And although God has made us to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” that is intended to impress upon us the necessity of a walk upon earth that is consistent with such a position, in Christ who represents us on high. This will be in “lowliness” before God and in “meekness” in our dealings with men. Longsuffering and not impatience well becomes those who have known “the longsuffering of our Lord” which is “salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15).

The Unity of the Spirit. As walking in lowliness and meekness we will endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the (uniting) bond of peace.” Unity has been formed by one Spirit uniting us to each other and to our Head in Heaven. The realization of this gives diligence to encourage holy relations with each other. Saints will be “holding the Head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of “ God” (Col. 2:19), the “joints” speaking of spiritual movement or action, the “bands” of the grace that binds together in the uniting bond of peace. The Spirit works along these lines. But when the mind of the flesh takes hold of these matters, it will even use the statement “there is one body” as the battle cry of disruption, party logic superseding the Spirit’s grace.

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. This intimates the recognition of Jesus as “Lord” by those in the Christian profession. The Epistle ‘to the Hebrews takes account of this. It addresses its audience as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” their profession

assumed to be real unless proved otherwise. But that letter shows the possibility of some in that profession falling away and becoming apostate, thereby showing that they had never been converted. There are many today in the public profession of Christianity who are proving themselves to be false, there are even some remaining actively within it who have all the earmarks of apostasy.

“One faith” is the truth “commonly believed among us” who are Christians, and is therefore called “the faith.” “One baptism” is the outward confession of Christ in baptism by water. It is no allusion to the baptism of the Spirit; had it been that it would have been found in the previous verse which deals with the subject of the “Spirit.” Where the term “baptism” is used in the epistles it refers to baptism by water; where baptism of the Spirit is meant it is so stated (1 Cor. 12:13).

One God and Father of All. He is said to be “above all, and through all, and in you all.” This speaks of God’s relation as Father to all His intelligent creatures, angelic or human.

The phrase “over all” speaks of His supremacy over all things: “through all” of His omnipresence; whereas “in you all” is an allusion to God in the wide extent of creation. We need to recognize that the expression “Father” is sometimes used to show the relation of God to angels and men (See Heb. 12:9). In Luke 15, in the last section of a three-fold parable (for it is one parable - V.2), the term sons is applied to sinners, for the parable is told to justify Christ’s reception of “sinners.” The Apostle spoke according to this in his dealings with the Athenians, describing mankind as “the offspring of

God” (Acts 17:28, 29). The passage before us in our Ephesian chapter is not in reference to our spiritual relationship with God as our Father (See 1 John 3:1), but as Creator and in that sense Father, the question of sin and its alienating results is not considered in the passage.

We have been considering then, three circles. (1) An inner circle, —“One body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” All is vital and eternal here, no apostasy possible. (2) “One Lord, one faith, one baptism,” — a larger circle, even that of the public profession of Christianity, real and unreal. (3) A still larger circle in its relation to the Father in His universal “ubiquity.”

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 9) (Aug-Sept 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1965.

John R. Reid

Christ’s Ministry In Ascension

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now He that ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:7-16).

Christ to Fill All Things. From the ascended Christ a measure of grace is given unto every one of us, that measure to contribute its quota of edification to the body of Christ; Christ deciding what measure will be given to each for spiritual increase in the body. We may believe, however, that with its exercise there will be growth in grace and therefore in the gift. The subject of "gifts," however, is still further treated, for we are told that when Christ "ascended up on high," after annulling the evil one, and in triumph leading "captivity captive," and having emancipated those in bondage also, He "gave gifts unto men." We are shown in Psalm 68:18, that as Man He received gifts in connection with their use among mankind. The "gifts," then, whom Christ sends among mankind are men who carry out their commission. But now "that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth;" but is now ascended "that He might fill all things." He is going to fill a universe of bliss with images of Himself reproduced in a redeemed people.

His Work Among Mankind. We are told that "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Seeing, however, that we are said to be built upon "the foundation" of the apostles and prophets (2:20), and as the foundation is already laid, that work being done, we will confine our attention to what is said as to "evangelists; pastors and teachers." All of these gifts are expressive of the power of a triumphant Christ, power that is irresistible. No power can hold for one moment anyone in captivity who submits to Jesus as Lord. The most determined, the most hostile, the most vile, the most cruel, the most humane, the most ignorant, the

most learned, will be instantly emancipated from sin and Satan the moment he confesses Jesus as Lord, believing in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead.

Examples of His Work. They are manifold and sometimes astonish us by the far-seeing vision that serves its purpose in so many unexpected ways. A Saul of Tarsus "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" is brought down from his arrogant eminence, and becomes the obedient and suffering minister of the faith he sought to destroy. The libertine Augustine, over whom a mother wept and prayed, receives a Bible message that drives out the evil that enslaved him, by attaching him eternally to Christ in glory, and that so effectually that he cannot refrain from writing his immortal "Confessions." Martin Luther, a German priest, having crossed the Alps, salutes Rome as "sanctified by the blood of martyrs." But in that very city, while ascending what was called "Pilate's Staircase," on his knees, is effectually searched and enlightened by one Bible text: "The just shall live by faith!" and is thenceforth a messenger of truth.

An elderly minister was told there had been only one person added to the church in a year, and this a boy. Discouraged, he wanted to be taken home to the Lord. When in this condition, the boy visited him. He had come to ask if some day he might be a "missionary." Evenutally, the minister passed on to his rest. Long afterward a veteran missionary from Africa held with rapt interest audiences in London and elsewhere as he pleaded for the unevangelized. Who was he? He was Robert Moffat, once the single convert of a year, and "only a boy."

Who could do things like these? It was a triumphant Christ. And let us be assured of this: Whatever apparent weakness may attend some of the religious movements of the day, at this very moment on this sin-stained earth, in the very throes of helplessness, there is only one thing that works deliverance, and that is the gospel. Let anyone who questions this, put it to the test personally.

Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. The first of these is included in the same plan as the two latter, so that they may work toward the same end, even although their work differs. The former obtains converts and thus furnishes material upon which the two latter are put to work by the Lord. That is why the phrase “and some pastors and teachers” links both together. For the converts need “pastors and teachers.” The pastor is a “gift” from Christ as definitely as the evangelist or teacher. He may preach a good gospel, and now and again a precious soul may be gained for Christ. He may minister very acceptably among the saints, but that does not make him an evangelist or teacher. His shepherd work consists of his wise application of truth to particular cases as they come before him. On the other hand, the teacher unfolds in an orderly way the great body of divine teaching in the Scriptures, thereby greatly helping the Lord’s people by the wisdom of God set forth in the Holy Scriptures that are of perpetual application in every age and circumstance, and thus always with a view to testimony.

The work of these gifts is for “the perfecting of the saints,” so that all function together for “the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Christian Maturity. The ministry we have been considering will continue “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (4:13). The word “come” (or arrive) indicates movement of heart that apprehends the truth in power and is swayed by it; it is the realization in this case of what is involved in Christ’s formation in Himself of “one new man” (2:15). This is what the Apostle means by the use of the word “perfect,” full-grown. When “we all” arrive at this, such an one is what is termed full-stature, it will be completion, it will be the full stature of the Church, which is “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

The present apprehension of this will prevent immaturity in Christians. Otherwise they will be like “children (babes), tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” They will often be perplexed about things, but ought not to be blown off their feet by any “wind of doctrine” brought to their attention. But as safeguarded, they will be “speaking (holding) the truth in love,” and growing up “into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” For from the Head comes grace to the members as fitted together. In their affections they grow up to the Head, always having Him in view; so that there is increase tending to the self-edification of the body in love. This is in an organism,

not an organization, hence, as has been well said, there can be no “loose screw” to jar the harmony the Head intended.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 10) (Oct 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 8, Oct 1965.

John R. Reid

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man. which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (4:17-24).

Converts to Break from Old Ways: The expression “the old man” used in this passage, does not exactly mean Adam, who was “the first man,” but is the reproduction in us of the character of fallen Adam, and is called “our old man;” it is what we were characteristically, what we were before we knew the Lord. But this character has been “put off,” it is “the old,” it is not what we are, for we have put on “the new man,” as those who have “learned Christ.” Of course, it is the same identical persons who are in view, whether considered as they formerly were or as they now are. We see, therefore,

that, as a people taught by Christ, the Apostle called upon these Gentile converts to walk in ways that were in contrast with their former lives in idolatry. That was a system of unbridled passion with “greediness” that pampered lasciviousness and sanctioned uncleanness; it continually stirred the foul depths of sinful flesh. The cause of this has been elsewhere explained by the Apostle. It was because mankind “did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28). But those who were now Christians were to “walk not as other Gentiles walk.”

Perhaps it may be thought that, however true such a description may have been of heathendom, it has a comparatively feeble application to us. Well, it is true that the effect of the gospel of God in Christendom has raised the standard of conduct; although we fear that some may be unaware of their obligation to it in this respect. But it is greatly to be deplored that there is in these last days of the Christian epoch a very manifest departure from the faith, already we behold the reappearance on a large scale of unrestrained passion, which will increase in the proportion in which divine control is disavowed.

The Ways of Christ: After depicting the ways of ignorance in an idolatrous setting, the Apostle can say to the Ephesians: “But ye have not so learned Christ.” What they had been taught was that “having put off the old man” (N.T.), which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” and, as renewed in the spirit of their mind, they had “put on the new man” which after God is created “in righteousness and true holiness.” They could say that at the cross of Christ “our old man is crucified

with Him, that the body of sin (sin in its totality) might be destroyed (annulled), that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). The new man is characterized by the ways resulting from a new life and nature. This is presented to us in the Scriptures as a great fact to be accepted by faith, so that by the Spirit given to all who believe, it may be put to use in practical deliverance from the ways of the flesh.

Deeds Of The New Man

"Wherefore putting away lying, speaking every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (4:25-32).

Guidance: As "members one of another," the telling of lies would be a practical denial of such membership, and would affect the entire body in a very hurtful way. As in our natural bodies all the limbs are in sympathy with each other, so we can see that by reference to our membership with each other the Apostle supplies a very intelligible motive for uprightness among Christians.

This leads very naturally to another question respecting what might prove to be very disturbing to the membership, it is in reference to the entrance of anger among them. And it is shown how it is possible to be angry without sinning. There are sometimes causes for righteous indignation at evil. Zeal for the right may be so aroused as to justify anger. We have an example of this when the zeal respecting His “Father’s house” stirred the Lord to cast out “all them that sold doves,” saying: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:12, 13). We are told that on one occasion He “looked round about” on His audience “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:45). But with us there is ever a possibility that even righteous anger may allow a mixture of motives in it that, unless discerned and brought under control, will develop into sin. The anger may become too personal, so that one is overcome by evil which he ought to have overcome; his anger may even develop into a chronic thing. Had the Apostle not warned the Ephesians of this there might at some time have developed some case that would have given “place to the devil,” opening a door to him who knows so well how to utilize such an opportunity. Surely we can see that the exhortation “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” is the very best counsel.

We are also apprised that a converted thief who was now in the Christian company in Ephesus was not only to be an honest man who paid his bills, but would be expected to become a benefactor to society. He was to work “with his hands the the thing that is good,” in contrast with his former dishonest ways, and to work so

that “he may have to give to him that needeth.” For Christians are spoken to in this way: “Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

“Corrupt communication” such as formerly proceeded out of the mouth was to give place to language calculated to build up by ministering “grace to the hearers.” Doubtless if we realized the sensitiveness of the Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption, our language would always be “with grace, seasoned with salt,” that which was gracious having that seasoning in it that maintained what was righteous. Finally, we are told, all heated and malicious language was to be disallowed.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 11) (Nov 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 9, Nov 1965.

Fruit Of The Light (Chapter V)

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (5:1, 2).

What we should imitate: The word “followers” is properly rendered imitators in our passage. The saints were to imitate God in His ways of grace toward the children of men, grace which they had known well, as realizing that they were regarded by God as His “dear children.” For God takes pleasure in His children, and watches their ways to see whether in disposition and behaviour they are like their Father. We know that it is a grievous thing for parents to have children whose ways are alien to the household, and contrary to its training and to the examples shown therein. And we may be sure that God, who has the feelings of a father, must be grieved if His children are hard-hearted and worldly.

And what a pattern has been given us for our walk in love, as seen in the Person of the One who “hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us,” when He offered Himself a sacrifice to God “for a sweet-smelling savor.” In this offering which ascended in its entirety to God, is expressed the love of Christ for us and the measure of our acceptance before God.

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (5:3-7).

Things To Be Avoided: The category of evils here listed would not be classified in this way by most people; they would not place fornication, covetousness, and jesting in such intimate relations. But it is so done by the Apostle. No doubt he finds it very necessary to refer in this way to such grave evils as these, for they were prevailing evils in the former lives of these converts from heathendom; they were to be avoided now. According to the old proverb: “You can’t touch pitch without being defiled!” This was a very necessary exhortation. Among other evils the Apostle points out that foolish talking and jesting “are not convenient” or befitting any who are known as Christians.

Some have thought that this warning deals with the tendency of some who relate “shady” tales with double meaning, as if they were humourous. This has sometimes been done by people who ought to be ashamed to do so, for it is more dangerous than the unblushing statement of filth; it is so like the devil’s sly introduction of what may lead further. However, we would not limit the warning to this. But we are made aware that the Apostle could see “afar off,” and knew how tendencies would work out, and knew this without

waiting until too late. He knew that unsuspecting Christians might regard as relaxation that which contained a snare that sometimes led to embarrassing situations; he was an experienced mariner on the sea of life warning against sunken rocks.

Signs of Lawlessness: Following up his warning against all uncleanness, some very plain words are spoken as to the character of sin. Let us remember that the Apostle John tells that “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4. N. Tran.). Therefore our Apostle says: “Let no man deceive you with vain words,” and shows that those characterized by the evils he has been depicting have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” never having come under the government of grace, for grace is holy. They reveal the ways of “the children of disobedience,” upon whom cometh “the wrath of God.” To be found in such ways would look like partnership in things pronounced upon by God as subject to wrath, and that by people who allege they are delivered from wrath, and that while walking in ways for which the lawless will suffer at the hands of God “indignation and wrath.” Let all such behaviour be under suspect. There is the possibility that some in the profession of Christianity are self-deceived and were never born of God. They may have been swept into a profession of emotional appeals, while the conscience had never been reached. Let all of us then heed the warning against the habits of the lawless, “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but

rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (5:8-14).

Darkness Personified: What n statement we have here, "Ye were sometimes darkness." It is not merely that they were enshrouded in darkness and quite naturally lulled to sleep by the falsifying atmosphere which the father of lies had created for his evil purpose, but they were darkness itself. Their ways exhibited alienation from the life of God, contrariety to what He is, and He is "light" — so that by their very existence they only increased the gloom by their contribution to the moral darkness descriptive of fallen mankind. So true is this in point of degree, that it is often those who would be regarded as the brightest intellects among us who are most expert in darkening counsel by words without knowledge. In their surmisings about God they only still further darken those of their fellow men who listen to them. They are the chief intensifiers of a darkness already too deep without their injections. And while we are aware that the darkness of the idolatrous system which our Apostle describes was very great, it differed to some extent from that of Christendom which is increasingly becoming darker by the rejection of light formerly known. Those antagonists of Christ, whom Scripture names as "antichrists," are men trained in a subtle misuse of terms by which "boring from within" they subvert the truth which they pretend to uphold. Using Christian terminology they are really arranging matters for the personal Antichrist, so that at his coming he can get

down to business without loss of time. How very necessary, then, it is for us today to weigh the words spoken by Him who is the Truth, who said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness” (Matt. 6:23). For where light has been and has been rejected, there the darkness becomes most intense. And we may well ask, What must be the end of such deepening darkness, even that of those who “love darkness rather than light?” Surely it must end in its eternal abode even “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13).

Children of Light: “But now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” To be described as light “in the Lord” reminds us that not in ourselves are we light. We are this in the Lord as having life in Him, and as having the Spirit so that His character may shine out from us. Moreover as “in the Lord” we are in His control. Thus we can shine out in testimony what He has shined in as revelation. “The fruit of the light” (for that is properly the text) will be in all “goodness and righteousness and truth;” these spiritual qualities expressing the light and proving well pleasing to the Lord. They will be like the way of Enoch who before his translation had “this testimony that he pleased God.” If the light of testimony is shining, it will be a reproof of “the unfruitful works of darkness,” in a way more effective than even to speak reprovingly of those things which are “done in secret.” We may add that this is a present testimony that the day is coming when the works of darkness will be judicially terminated and superseded by the shining of the Sun of Righteousness dispelling hurtful influences. That “Day” has not arrived

yet, but as sons of the day we know what it will be like and bear testimony to it now. That is why we are here.

Asleep Among the Dead: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Although Christians have the light of God in them, they are in a world where the moral atmosphere is darkness; and if they heed not the exhortations given them, that atmosphere will encroach upon them and put them to sleep among the “dead,” so that few will discern any difference between them. Nevertheless, even such an one, if he heeds the call to “awake,” will realize that Christ will shine upon him, warming his heart and brightening his life.

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 12) (Dec 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 10, Dec 1965.

John R. Reid Sr.

Circumspection

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (5:15-21).

Avoiding Dangerous Tendencies The Lord’s people are to walk “circumspectly,” avoiding ways that bring reproach upon the testimony of God. They are to “look on all sides; looking around.” Or give “attention to all the facts and circumstances of a case, and to the natural or probable consequences of a measure, with a view to a correct course of conduct, or to avoid unfavorable results” (Webster). There are none upon earth who ought to be wiser than the people of God, for God has made Christ to be “wisdom” to them, and He is always available, teaching them the way in which they should go. Consequently they will buy up “the opportunities” in an evil day, this being one of the simplest exercises of prudence, idleness being a menace in which “Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do.” Such will have

understanding, like the children of Issacher, that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chr. 12:32). Understanding and obedience are to go together.

Debauchery. Drunkeness is debauchery. Nevertheless, we read that on account of his infirmity Timothy was to drink "no longer only water, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent illnesses" (1 Tim. 5:23. N. T.) But this would not be debauchery, which deprives its victims of their senses as responsible and intelligent creatures of God. It is written: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish" (Pro. 31:6), a wise and necessary provision in some circumstances. The present writer witnessed how it saved the life of a man who had been rescued from what appeared to be death from drowning. Using it, however, as so many do, in attempting to bring joy leads to an excitement that develops into debauchery. Even Noah was overcome by this appetite, although God had vested the government of the earth in him (Gen. 9:1-7). But he failed to govern himself. Hence we learn in the New Testament epistles that the Apostle had to dwell bluntly upon the matter and, writing to converts from idolatry in which this evil was prevalent, warned even the "aged women" in the Cretian assemblies against being given to "much wine" (Tit. 2:3).

Filled With The Spirit. In contrast with the excitement sometimes named gladness, the result of being filled with the Spirit is that Christ becomes paramount in the life and His praises will ascend. Thus the Apostle can say: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Were the Spirit not grieved by self

indulgence on our part, much praise would ascend to Him who is worthy. The expression “speaking to yourselves” means that in a mutual way we would be “speaking to each other” in our glad utterances to the Lord. For heavenly anthems ascending to the Lord also speak to us., they are instructive; by them we may be found “teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16). There would be in this way a wholesome atmosphere expressed in readiness to give “thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” a tone of things that would exclude petty viewpoints that darken the life. We regret to say that this is sometimes lacking. Quite recently we heard the expression of a Christian who had attended some of the meetings. His remark was: “I think these are very earnest people, but I don’t see much joy among them!” This ought not to be.

In this letter the Apostle shows that if the Ephesians were in right and happy relations with God, in the nature of things they would be right with each other, they would be found “submitting … one to another in the fear of God.”

Pattern For The Married State

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a

glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His Body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (5:22-33).

Submission unto Husbands. Having spoken of the mutual submission which is so necessary in the Church circle, the Apostle, continuing the subject, takes it up in another way, in another circle, that of the home. In speaking, however, on submission to husbands, it is hardly necessary to affirm that in so doing it does not put the woman in a position of inferiority, the Scripture description elsewhere of her as the completeness, as the glory, of the man, excluding such a thought. There cannot, however, be two heads in a home, that would signify division, while the divine thought is unity. Therefore the recognition of husband-headship is necessary if there is to be well-being in the married state, the submission involved being "as unto the Lord," whom we know as the Head of the Church which is His body; thus He is "the Saviour of the body," which is dependent upon the Head for direction. Similarly, husband-headship is for blessing, the head directing in such a way that there is practical salvation from what is hurtful in a lawless world. The Scripture we are

considering, however, treats of the subject in a brief way, confining it to its simple proper setting, and does not deal with possible details of failure which might intrude on either side of the question. The guidance necessary when such issues may arise are to be found in other parts of Scripture.

Love of Husbands for Wives. It has often been observed that in these passages the Bible instructions as to conduct are addressed directly to the parties concerned. The wives are not addressed respecting the conduct of their husbands, nor are the husbands addressed respecting the conduct of their wives, but each one is told how to function properly in her own or in his own position. Hence the word to husbands is: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” Thus in the measure in which husbands realize the love of Christ for the Church, will they learn how they ought to love their wives, and this will prove to be of saving effectiveness from what is harmful. Christ’s saviourship of the “body” takes the form of sanctifying and cleansing it “with the washing of water by the Word,” its cleansing and refreshment being affected by His skilful and gentle application of the Word. Thus it will be evident to us that the husband as a saviour is on the side of the wife as the result of his learning his own lessons in the school of Christ.

The end our Lord has in view in His saviourship of the Church is that He “might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot (of defilement) or wrinkle (of age) or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (blame). Perhaps at this point it may be well to note that having built the rib He had taken out of man, into a woman, God “brought her to the

man.” She was the result of divine skill, and as such was presented to the man. But when we come to consider the Antitype, we learn that Christ Himself sought and secured for Himself the Church, fashioning it according to His affectionate desire and wisdom, in order that “He might present it to Himself” a glorious Church. Thus will He satisfy the love that led Him to “give Himself” for the object of His desire. As a “merchant man, seeking godly pearls” (Matt. 13:45), as a merchant who can appraise values in his line of business, so Christ in the purpose of His love foresaw the Church as she will be in the day of presentation. On that glad day, there will not be a trace of the flesh seen in her; all will be new creation; all will be in the power of the Spirit; all will be reflective of Christ.

Closest of Human Relationships. Still adhering to his subject, the Apostle reflects: — “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body.” A further statement is connected with this one, namely: “We are of His flesh, and of His bones” (N.T.). As united by the Spirit to Christ in glory we are members of His body. But the further statement is an illusion to what took place with Eve; she came out of Adam, she was “of his flesh and of his bones,” she was his bride. Similarly has the Church derived her spiritual being from Christ.

The Epistle To The Ephesians (Part 13) (Jan 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 1, Jan 1966.

John R. Reid Sr.

Behaviour In The Household (Chapter 6:1-9)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. 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 menpleasurers; 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 things any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him."

Children. Evidently this exhortation as well as the exceeding wisdom of it lies in the fact that the parents referred to are "in the Lord," which implies that they recognize His right to control their own lives. Knowing then how wholesome and beneficial is that gracious rule, they cannot think of any other for their children, and so

endeavor as far as possible to extend its great benefits to them.

In so doing they are manifestly bringing the guidance of the “Lord” to bear on their children, procedure on their part being self-evidently “right.” Thus such children are advised that disobedience is wrong, being contrary to the Lord. The importance of this was revealed very early in the history of Israel, for of the ten commandments, this was the “first commandment with promise.” For in it all the children of that race were especially encouraged to obedience by divine reward of well-being, and long life. On the other hand, solemn predictions in the Scriptures warned the unruly thus: “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it” (Pro. 30:17).

We may add that the allusion to the reward under the law for obedience does not necessarily mean that the material benefits of the legal period are carried forward into the Christian epoch. It is cited to show the exceptional importance which God attached to this particular commandment, seeing it was “the first” in which a reward was promised. That being so, it is evident that it is ever true that obedience to parents brings blessing in its train. For the expression “in the Lord” implies not authority alone but blessing also. This was exemplified in Joseph whom Pharaoh made Lord over Egypt. Thus he became the administrator of the benefits of that land, so that suppliants for bread were told to “go to Joseph.” Similarly, although on a larger scale, Jesus as Lord is the divine administrator of blessing for man.

But let us note the following words of Scripture: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Both parents are to be honored, and any attempt by a child to select one parent for honor and another for contempt ought to be disallowed. Any parent who encourages this is acting contrary to government “in the Lord.” Discrimination of this sort may develop into disastrous results. Moreover, secretive proposals to one parent should be discouraged. This, of course, has no reference to matters of such sort as could only be properly attended to particularly by the mother or by the father, as the case might be. All, however, will understand that in the early stages of life the mother in continual contact with the children is endowed of God with the special qualifications for that work.

Fatherly Training. “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” Very great knowledge, very tender and wise consideration, that will avoid too severe pressure of authority is found in these words of counsel. Even the most generous of fathers may err as to this parental attitude. Because he begins to understand one child he may suppose that he can handle each one alike, although there are pronounced differences between them. One when questioned on a matter can state the case plainly and when all is considered, it is less serious than was supposed. But another cannot explain readily, especially if approached angrily; he becomes flustered and almost looks guilty, and may be unjustly punished. In this way and quite unintentionally a father may have harmed a child whom he loved, and may often wonder how it is that that child “never understood” his well-meant intentions, unaware that the misunderstanding was mutual. However, as scholars in the school of God,

there is every opportunity to acquire discernment that will qualify to bring up children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” the “nurture” being thoughtful training, the “admonition” being warning of the pitfalls on every hand.

Servants And Masters. The servants exhorted to obedience were bond-servants, and often, although not always, were located in the homes of their masters. Gibbons cites figures in his History which he believes justifies him in saying that one half of the Roman empire was comprised of a slave population. And we know that, even allowing for some proportion of humane masters, slaves were held in a grip of iron, any of whom could be put to death for the slightest offence or for no offence; in fact some would crucify a slave merely to gratify a sadistic disposition. But the gospel had reached and laid hold of some of these people. And it altered them while leaving them in unaltered circumstances. Consequently the question arose: How ought a converted slave to behave? The answer was: “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.” They were to follow in the pathway of their Master who said “My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight” (John 18:36). In a letter to Titus the Apostle lets us know that converts in the island of Crete, came from among a people who had been denounced by one of their own prophets as “always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies,” yet are informed that by obedience, honesty and goodwill “they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:9, 10). Although slaves they had it in their power to exhibit the grace of God,

while submitting of a little time to an order of things which fallen man had established, but which God would overturn when He sent His Son back into this world to administer world government. And although they received no wages, their Master in Heaven was such that “whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” In the meantime where the gospel has found entrance, it becomes only a matter of time until slavery ceases to exist.

The masters addressed here are Christian masters. To such it is said: “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.” In the Epistle to Philemon we read of a slave named Onesimus who had stolen and run off to Rome. But there, perhaps in poverty or trouble, perhaps in prison, he gets into touch with Paul and is converted. Whereupon, bearing a letter from the Apostle, he is sent back to his master who has it in his power to forgive the runaway and even have grace to release him. The immortal letter seems to suggest this, and we believe it was granted. However the motive for behaviour in Christian masters is: “Your Master also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.” In Heaven there is one Master, and there the elements of evil introduced upon earth by fallen man among his fellows are absent, and thence is due time will come that Master to purify its rule by the judgments by which the earth shall learn righteousness.

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 14) (Feb 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 2, Feb 1966.

John R. Reid Sr.

Conflict In Heavenly Places (Chapter VI: 10-17)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak” (6:10-20).

We are now nearing a place in our meditations where it may be well to remember that Scripture describes

Christians in various aspects. In one place they are informed that Paul uses his Roman citizenship for protection from torture; in another that their citizenship is in Heaven (Acts 22:25; Phil. 3:20). Sometimes Christians are portrayed as strangers and pilgrims, sometimes as seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Apostle tells the men how to pray everywhere, and the women how to dress (1 Tim. 2:8-10); but says also: "There is… neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Each of these views is regarded abstractly, as confined to the subject in hand, and must be given its force in its own setting; but their consideration is necessary if there is to be intelligent behaviour in the fear of God.

War: In the section of our Epistle which is now immediately before us, we are to consider the waging of war by a people seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (2:6). They are to take a "stand" for this position and all that it involves. Actually they are upon the earth in bodies not yet adapted to Heaven, but their position is in Christ Jesus representatively in the heavenlies; they are to understand what this means and, as a heavenly people upon earth, to maintain present testimony to their heavenly position in Christ Jesus. The devil's chief business will be to destroy appreciation and maintenance of this in practical life. Their business is to "stand."

When Israel entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, they found enemies before them in the land who resisted their endeavor to occupy the inheritance granted them. So it is now, only that our conflict is not with flesh and blood as was theirs, it is against wicked spirits. Hence we are to "put on the whole armour of

God," leaving no exposed part to the enemy. In ourselves there is no power of resistance to assault, but our Lord tells us that His strength is perfected in weakness. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Pro. 18:10). We cannot resist the enemy in our own name; but when he meets Christ in us, he flees.

Our Enemies: We wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The devil has an army equipped in all the devices of diabolism used in the battles of ages, led by chiefs seasoned in warfare, and who carry out the plans of their commander in chief. We are made aware of this however: that although the devil was flushed with the victories of forty centuries when he met Christ, he met his Master then. One who by death "having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). The organization of evil has suffered irreparable defeat, and its leader has been annulled by Him who came to "destroy the works of the devil" (Heb. 2:14), and deliver those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

The Enemy's Tractics: They are called the "wiles of the devil." Aware that he had been defeated in the battle of the ages, he now has recourse to artifice rather than to that of attack as a "roaring lion," as was his method in the persecutions that made the blood of the martyrs "the seed of the Church." He tried that method in Russia, but it worked as of old. He is now handling some things in that country differently, but he is at work just the same. At least artifice is his method in the conflict immediately

before us. Thus as located in heavenly places he would take advantage of our actual location on earth while we maintain our heavenly position in Christ, by using against us “the darkness of this world,” so that its encroachments might bring drowsiness and sleep upon us, and thus rob us of interest in heavenly things, and the energy for heavenly conflict. It is by such tactics he puts many out of action, reducing them to helplessness by worldliness. Therefore the caution: “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” Broadly speaking the entire period of our sojourn upon earth may be called the evil day, but considered in respect of the conflict in question, the occasion of each planned attack upon us is “the evil day” we are warned about. However if we put on the armour provided us, “having done all,” we shall be found standing after an attack has spent its fury, instead of being overcome by the wiles of the devil.

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 15) (Mar 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 3, Mar 1966.

John R. Reid

The Girdle Of Truth: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” In this way we are told there is a girdle called the “truth” which we ought to use. This is further impressed upon us by the Apostle Peter who says: “Gird up the loins of your mind” (1 Pet. 1:13). Thus we learn that the girdle is the truth, and the loins are the mind. Hence, the mind being controlled by the truth will not be open to the wiles of the evil one. Our Lord said, “Thy word is truth.” How necessary then it is that we read the Scriptures much, and in communion with God. In saying this it is not suggested that we should only read the Bible, but that we should not be diverted from it by anything. As to reading other books, we know that the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy as follows: “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13). Doubtless the parchments were Holy Writings which had their distinctive place in Paul’s sense of values; but being in custody and having an exceptional opportunity to read, he wanted the “books.”

We are living in a day when many are alarmed at the hurtful results from what is presented to the public in the “shows.” To this we might add that there is the danger that some who do not attend the shows may be hurt by the “listening in” process. But of late there has

been quite an outcry against very hurtful literature being pressed upon the attention of the public, and even Christians may be affected thereby. Christians who read whatever comes to hand, thinking they can throw off at pleasure what offends, discover that this is not so easily done, and that remaining suggestions breed corruption. Our Lord pointed this out long ago when He said: “No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, the old is better” (Luke 5:39). He has acquired an appetite which he cannot get rid of “straightway.”

Thoughts are formed by reading, and if the literature is injurious and is persisted in, these thoughts will gradually be translated into actions; and the mind being reduced to slavery, the character becomes “as a gnarled crooked tree which none may straighten.” The tyranny over the will that finally enthrones itself has been pointed out often in alarming fashion. Donald Sage Mackay has written long ago in “The Religion of the Threshold,” that “Henry Drummond once told of a man who had gone to a London physician to consult about his eyes. The physician looked into the man’s eyes with a delicate ophthalmoscope, and then said quietly to the man: ‘My friend, you are practising a certain sin, and unless you give it up, in six months you will be blind.’ For a moment the man stood trembling in the agony of discovery, and then, turning to the sunlit window, he looked out and exclaimed: ‘Farewell, sweet light, farewell!’ “

Perhaps it may be said: Surely Christians do not need to be warned in this way! But let us answer most solemnly, and we trust in all humility: The flesh in the Christian is the same kind of flesh that is in the sinner, and unless

we are walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, we are in danger. Let us therefore heed the wise apostolic counsel: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” Where girded loins and practical sanctification by the truth is ignored, the very alert rulers “of the darkness of this world” will ensnare the unwary.

The Breastplate: We are to put on the “breastplate of righteousness.” Those who know that Christ is their only righteousness before God, are called upon to ways of righteousness in every-day behaviour. It is imperative that they realize that ways unlike the ways of God with them are unrighteous. This may assume many forms. The absence of grace and the exercise of harshness is an exhibition of unrighteousness that reveals insensibility to the grace that forgave “ten thousand talents.” The absence of truthfulness indicates unrighteousness on the part of those who believe that at the cross “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). These and other forms of unrighteousness need to be avoided or “the wiles of the devil” will ensnare us into a condition of cowardice unfitting us for heavenly warfare. If what is not right is regarded in the heart, God will not heed our prayers (Psa. 66:18). And we shall become aware that we have no breastplate upon us, and are unable to make a stand before the enemy. Such will not stand in the evil day but will be in retreat, they will be “slackers” and not good soldiers, their mouths will be closed as witnesses for Christ. So well aware was the Apostle of such possibilities that he told his examiners and accusers before the Roman governor Felix: “I exercise myself, to

have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man" (Acts 24:16).

Shoes: "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This is further equipment to frustrate every device of Satan to weaken our testimony to God by a walk with unshod feet. We remember how Moses speaking for Jehovah said: "I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy feet" (Dent. 29:5). And if this was true literally in the provision for Israel traversing the wilderness and the flinty rock, we may be sure that the spiritual shoes for the warriors of the cross will never wax "old" upon their feet. The need for such care may be illustrated from natural life. An athlete will tell an intimate friend: "I'm slipping, my feet are going back on me!" Large employers of men are known to employ a chiropodist to take care of the feet of their salesmen, believing that in certain positions "a salesman is only as good as his feet." Similarly, speaking to us in our own language, God reminds us that we cannot wage a good fight unless we are well shod, even with "the preparation of the gospel of peace." For the peace resulting from the reception of the gospel, the delight in God which accompanies it, gives buoyancy to the movements of the Christian, and often attracts to Christ those who wander in darkness. A deep sense of the grace of God, and the peace that accompanies this, is something that baffles the evil one in his attempts to seduce from the path of righteousness.

Shield. Helmet. Sword. "Above all (over all) taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." Even after considerable care in donning armor, one might overlook the defense of

some part that remains exposed, and at which the evil one might hurl fiery darts. He might put evil thoughts into the mind, suggesting doubt as to the goodness of God in permitting certain happenings. But “faith” takes everything which God permits directly from Him and not from the instrument active in the matter. Did not the Lord say to Smyrna: “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The Lord knew what the devil was about to do, and permitted it in His inscrutable wisdom, but limited it to “ten days.” He was in control of the situation. In the meantime He encouraged those whom He loved, by reminding them that they would “not be hurt of the second death,” the terrible “hurt” awaiting the resisters of the gospel for which the Christians suffered. With the shield of faith these good soldiers of Jesus Christ were enabled to pray for their enemies and suffer death. They were unvulnerable to fiery darts.

“Take the helmet of salavation.” Those who put on this helmet experience the blessedness of these words: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (2:5, 6). And again: This Man … “is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:24, 25). Such have an every-day salvation from the flesh, the devil, and the world. This forms an helmet that enables them to hold up their heads in battle and make the right moves, never losing what one has called “presense of mind.” A deep sense of saving grace gives confidence, and as delivered from this

present evil world, they are enabled to maintain their heavenly position.

“Take… the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” It has often been said that this is the only offensive weapon furnished in this conflict. The expression “the sword of the Spirit, which it the Word of God,” suggests not so much the canon of Scripture as such, but the special word for the occasion, translated by one: “The saying of God,” which proves to be conclusive in wrestling with wicked spirits; so that one who had been a defender becomes an assailant. In this war victories have been gained by opportune use of the Scriptures through the Spirit’s application to the situation involved. As an example: It is told of Robert Moffat, missionary in Africa, who was to preach in the kitchen of a Boer (where the farmer’s wife and six grown children sat), asked: “When are the working people coming in?” “What,” replied the farmer, “you don’t mean the Hottentots… you might as well preach to those dogs under the table!” But Moffat read, “Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table!” (Matt. 15:27). This proved to be the sword of the Spirit in action. For now a crowd of blacks thronged the kitchen and heard the blessed word of God from the lips of Moffat.

The Epistle to the Ephesians (Part 16) (Apr 1966)

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John R. Reid Sr.

Prayer

"Praying always (at all seasons) with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perserverence and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (6:18-20).

After the divine description of the nature of the war in which we are engaged, of the tactics of the commander-in-chief of the thoroughly equipped military machine that opposes us as a heavenly people who seek to stand for the present maintenance of our heavenly portion in Christ; and after the description of the armour furnished us in order that we may wage efficient warfare; how necessary it is that we give ourselves to prayer, and never be found off guard.

Praying At All Seasons. We are to be found praying at every season and in respect of every matter that comes up in our lives; every such season becomes an occasion to bring God into it as recognizing His control and our need of guidance. There is to be an habitual attitude of heart that refers to God in every circumstance, never leaving Him out of our reckoning in any matter. As to the

bearing of this upon us as individuals, some have been perplexed who had tried to concentrate attention upon spiritual matters all day long, and could not do so. Nothing like this perplexity is contemplated in our passage. For the sake of clarity let us take a Christian who is a machinist. If he does not concentrate attention upon his work, he will dishonor the Lord by defective workmanship, and will be in exceptional danger of losing some of his fingers. In what way then can he pray "at all seasons?" He does so by regularly committing himself into the hand of God about all his circumstances, and then does with his might whatsoever his hand finds to do (Ecc. 9:10), as he "ought to do."

As to prayer among his fellow-Christians, let us refer the reader to an old booklet by C. H. Mackintosh, entitled "Prayer and the Prayer Meeting." If no longer obtainable in separate form, it can be found in Volume of his "Miscellaneous Writings." Some of his remarks therein we insert here. "Some deem it better to stay away" from long, tiresome, desultory, preaching prayers" (such as he had been describing in the article). "Now, we more than question the rightness of such a course… Surely it is not right for any to stay away because of the feebleness, failure, or even the folly of some who may take part in the meeting. If all the really spiritual members were to stay away on such a ground, what would become of the prayer meeting? … One must think of the Lord's glory…and try to promote the good of others in every possible way; and neither of these ends, we may rest assured, can be obtained by our deliberately absenting ourselves from the place where prayer is wont to be made. We repeat, and with emphasis, the words, 'deliberately absenting ourselves'

—staying away because we are not profited by what takes place there… We may set it down as a fixed principle that the one who can designedly absent himself from the prayer meeting is in a bad state of soul."

Now if our brother felt as strongly about conditions when he wrote thus what would he feel if he attended some present-day meetings for prayer. He might get to a place where over a hundred assembled to take the Lord's Supper, and find a dozen present at the prayer meeting. Let us ask: What does God think of this?

Sometimes we hear standbys at the prayer meetings pleading with God for a "revival" among His people, and we may say, we shall be thankful if it is granted. But we believe one of the first proofs of its elements will be a noticeable increase of attendance at the prayer meeting. We are, of course, glad to see large congregations at periodical conferences, and thankful for searching ministry at them, but we are afraid that the ministry is not laying hold of the conscience until we see a marked change at the prayer meeting.

"Supplication in the Spirit" implies the casting of particular cases upon God with a proper humility, and might sometimes take the form of agonizing before Him about conditions. The Apostle Paul had such exercise of heart about some whose faces he had never seen as, for instance, the church in Colosse (Col. 2:1); while "watching thereunto with all perseverence and supplication for all saints," entails a recollection of the requests that had been made, and a patient waiting upon God for answers to them. Collective prayer was a characteristic feature in the infant Church, it was

habitual, and it was “for all saints,” for all whom God had called by His grace and had set apart from other people for a holy purpose.

In addition to all this, our Apostle says to the saints in Ephesus: Pray “for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly,… as I ought to speak.” It is to be observed that when he requests the prayers of saints, he specifies the subject of request, and reveals the purpose of heart he had respecting that request. He asks their prayers (1) that he might be enabled to continue in his work with the necessary boldness, for (2) he realized that as a special representative of God, in the interests of Christ, being “an ambassador” who was entrusted with a great commission; he must see the matter through, even in a faithful ministry of “the mystery of the gospel.”

This expression seems to suggest that the gospel in its fulness includes “the mystery” we have been considering. Thus Paul speaks of “my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery” (Rom. 16:25). This at least is clear, that the proclamation of the gospel to the lost prepared the converts for the subsequent ministry of “the mystery.” Thus in the actual order of his labors, the Apostle speaks of two ministries: (1) The proclamation of the Glad Tidings “to every creature which is under Heaven,” and (2) the ministry of the truth of “the mystery” to the saints (Col. 1:23-26). But as one who was well aware of the unbelief of those whom he approached with the gospel, and of the authority of darkness in control of the many, he realized his need of boldness as granted of God, that he might speak as he “ought to speak,” and

therefore sought a share in the prayers of the people of God.

Conclusion

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. (6:21-24). Knowing that the beloved saints among whom he had been “by the space of three years” “serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears” (Acts 20:19) would be interested in knowing of his “affairs” and “all things” pertaining to the testimony and his condition as an old man in prison, he tells them that Tychicus, the writer and bearer of this Epistle, will give them all this information, and will comfort their hearts by so doing, he having been sent for that purpose. He concludes with the well known salutation: “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”