

The Old Paths

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“A Study Of Ephesians 2:13 & 16”

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When the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian brethren, he reminded them that they at one time had been dead in sin, but due to their salvation from sin, had been “quicken’d” (made alive) in Christ (Eph. 2:1-5). Following this, we read one of the most detailed descriptions of what it means to be lost. These folks 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*” (Eph. 2:12). Yet, in the very next verse we see a great contrast, for the Ephesian Christians were no longer in that condition! Rather, they were saved from their sins. The account of the conversion of these Ephesians is found in the book of Acts 19:1-5. Paul then continued with them for three years. Now, while in a Roman prison, Paul writes a letter to the Ephesians and says, “*But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*” (Eph. 2:13). He says it once more in Ephesians 2:16: “*And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby*”. These two verses parallel each other, and speak to us about the “where,” “to whom,” “how,” and “what” of salvation that all Christians experience. Please study these verses carefully, and notice how the Holy Spirit answers these questions in

Ephesians 2:13, 16.

The Question Of “What?” Is Answered.

In other words, “*What* was Christ doing in saving men from sin?” Ephesians 2:13, 16 says Christ was making men “nigh” or “reconciling” men when He saved them. He was taking folks who were away from Him, i.e., who were His enemies (Jas. 4:4), and making them friends with Him again. Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection made it possible for men and women who were formerly strangers and enemies of Christ (v. 12), to be friends with Him (v. 16).

The Question “To Whom?” Is Answered.

“*To whom* did Christ offer salvation?” When we study the context of Ephesians 2:13 and 16, we find salvation is offered to both Jews and Gentiles. In the Old Testament, God chose a certain nation to be His people, but now in Christ, all men have the opportunity to be called God’s people when they render obedience to the gospel, regardless of nationality (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16; etc.).

When Christ was on earth, He said plainly that He came to seek and save all lost people (Lk. 19:10). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit states that He died for every man. Jesus said that He had come to give His life a ransom “for many”, not just for the few (Matt. 20:28). Therefore, those who at one time were “far off” are invited to come and partake of Heaven’s salvation! This

is why Jesus said the gospel needs to be preached everywhere (Mk. 16:15; I Cor. 4:17; II Tim. 4:2; I Thess. 1:8; etc.).

The Question Of “Where?” Is Answered.

“*Where* is salvation to be found?” Ephesians 2:13 says “*in Christ Jesus,*” and verse 16 further explains, “*in one body*”. We find salvation in Christ, or in His body! No, these verses do not speak of two different things, but speak of the same thing; for we get “*into Christ*” by being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). Further, when we are baptized into Christ, the Lord adds us to His body, the church (Acts 2:47).

The Lord’s church is of such a special nature that we find all the saved folks in it! Christ died and shed His blood to purchase her (Acts 20:28). Knowing that the church is a blood-bought institution, we see that God adds all the saved and only the saved to His church (Acts 2:47). There are no “unsaved” people in His church, and there are no saved people outside of the church! “*By (the teaching of, JJ) one spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (I Cor. 12:13). This verse emphasizes the unity and completeness of the Lord’s church. It also declares that God’s word makes a distinction between New Testament baptism, and the baptism practiced by the denominational world! Many folks say that denominational baptism is identical to New Testament baptism, because it is a burial in water, or because they say “for the remission of sins.” Let us also bear in mind what is revealed in I Corinthians 12:13, among other verses. Namely, that if one has not been baptized into the one body, and therefore added to the Lord’s church (Eph. 1:22, 4:4; Col. 1:18, 23) by God (Acts 2:47), this person has not

submitted to the baptism described in the New Testament!

Yes, it is a serious thing when we think about one's baptism into Christ, being added to the Lord's church, and how this constitutes the "where" of salvation!

The Question Of "How?" Is Answered.

"How can folks be saved from sin?" In both verses, we see the sacrifice described which brought about salvation. "By the cross," or "by His blood", salvation is made available to men and women. At the cross, we see the event wherein Christ's blood was shed (Jn. 19:33-34). When this happened, we see that it fulfilled Christ's promise that His blood would be shed "for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7). How is it possible that man can be forgiven of sins? It is by or through the blood of Christ! Revelation 1:5 says that Christ "washed us from our sins in His own blood." Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Heb. 9:22), so we can see how important Christ's blood is in the Lord's plan for saving man!

The question of "how" also complements the question of "where." You see, Christ shed His blood "for the remission of sins." When we are then baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), such action brings us in connection with the cleansing effects of that blood! Therefore, the "how" of salvation neatly fits with the "where" of salvation! One cannot be saved without Christ's blood; and when we submit to the Lord's condition in baptism into Christ, we are saved from sin, and belong to His body!

Conclusion

Now that we have the answers to these questions about salvation, let us tell others what God has said! Let us not waver,

or try to change the message. Let us be satisfied simply speak as God has told us to speak! I make this point because there are many in this world not satisfied with God's plan and wish to change it.

For example, there are people who do not want to hear taught that the "where" of salvation is found within the Lord's church. They think it is too "divisive" to speak of only one church, and how all men need to be a part of it. Yet, if we agree to such demands, where does this lead? Once we give in to such demands, and we compromise concerning the "where" of salvation, how long will it be before another person demands that we also compromise about the "how" of salvation, encouraging us not to speak of the sacrificial death of Christ for fear that we might "offend" someone who does not believe in Christ as the Son of God? See how one error leads to another?

What can we do? All we can do is what the apostles and early Christians were told to do: "Preach the word"! Let us be thankful to God for His plan of salvation, and let us faithfully and humbly submit to it while we have the time to do so.

We have no promise of tomorrow. Therefore, let us stand in awe of the wisdom of God, and how He made such an intricate plan of salvation so simple that any of us can believe, obey His will and be saved!

Pointed Paragraphs

Sometime ago a Christian man asked a gospel preacher: "Why do we not have great gospel sermons like those we used to hear?" The reply was: "There is no demand for them." Do that question and answer reveal conditions as they are? Have we reached the point where preaching is trimmed down to fit the demands of the times? Is preaching thus reduced to a matter of trade?

Some factories make only those articles that are in demand. But occasionally an article is offered for sale for which there has been no demand, but the makers of such articles proceed to create a demand. They do extensive advertising; they extol the uses and virtues of their article till people want it. And cannot we in the same way create a demand for the pure gospel in communities where there is no demand? We cannot do it by dealing in religious soup. There is a demand for the unadulterated gospel, for great gospel sermons; but the demand is not as extensive nor as intensive as it should be. Even in some churches of Christ there is not as strong demand for gospel sermons as there should be. When an elder can say, as some of them have said, "So far as I am concerned, I do not care whether our preacher can preach or not," it is time we were waking up.

(Whiteside, R.L., *The Kingdom Of Promise And Prophecy*, p. 66).

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