

"The Hebrew Evangel"

The concluding part of a two part study which began in our previous issue. If you missed the previous study, write or call for a copy.

The evangel proclaimed by Paul removes the law, but Peter's evangel does not. The features of repentance, pardon and baptism take their point in the fact of law, but justification is "apart from law." Saul was not saved by Peter's evangel. Under the terms of Peter's evangel, Saul ought to have been exterminated (Ac.3:23). Saul was not for hearing that Prophet, nor was he at all repentant.

Deliverance from law was entirely absent from the Circumcision evangel. Later, mere legalists joined issues with Paul on this question, yet their objections could not be made against the evangel defined by the term Circumcision. For the nations to adopt law would mean nothing less than separation from Christ (Gal. 5:1-6). Why is this? The salvation to which Israel is being called is not the salvation to which the nations are introduced.

Let us turn back to examine pardon and faith in the evangel of the Circumcision. Pardon means to let off. It does not put its recipients beyond condemnation. It does not preclude falling aside. Nor does it intimate reconciliation, just as law and ritual do not intimate reconciliation.

Pardon requires God to pass over the penalties of sins.

It requires the continuance of God's forbearance, yet does not begin to display His righteousness, or the fact that God can be and is also a Justifier. Pardon presumes that good works will ensue. See the illustration regarding land which does not bring forth good herbage (Heb. 6:7,8). Pardon requires "things which have to do with salvation" (Heb. 6:9), and "diligence . . . until the consummation" (Heb. 3:6,14; 6:11; 1 Pet. 2:4; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). There is great reward for endurance (Heb. 10:35,36, 11-6. Here we see the force of "enduring" as counselled in Mt. 10:22; 24:13). Even those of the nations, who were previously in contact with God's revelation and, under the Circumcision evangel, came into touch with Israel, were expected to be "acting righteously" (Ac. 10:35).

The difference between the faith of those who believe the evangel of the Circumcision and those who believe the evangel of the Uncircumcision lies in the message which each believe. The faculty to believe is the same in each case, but the character of the faith is related to the contents of the word addressed to them.

Note how a particular faith arises and what its accompaniments are. The faith of the Uncircumcision was sealed by holy spirit; but that of the Circumcision was corroborated by signs, miracles and various powerful deeds (Heb. 2:4). Indeed, the powers of the impending eon, to which the evangel directed them, were present along with the confirmation of the Lord's message by those who hear Him (Heb. 6:5). Their faith was called forth by these factors. Thus, around this faith we find such aspects as, "believe the works" (Jn. 10:38). Again, in response to the question as to how men may work the work of God: "this is the work of God that you may be believing into the One Whom He commissions" (Jn. 6:29)." And, when it is occurring, you shall be believing" (Jn. 14:29).

Faith, then, varies in its value and stability according to its basic message. It may require works to perfect it (Jas. 2:22), or endurance to prevent shrinking back (Heb. 10:38). And so, with the delay in the coming of the kingdom, the position arises as to whether the faith of the saints will continue, and so confirm the reality of the repentance, the baptism and pardon. If the kingdom was to be postponed indefinitely, to what purpose was their change of attitude toward Him Whom Israel had slain and gibbeted? In the epistles of Peter, and in that to the Hebrews, the saints are urged to maintain the faith which had accompanied their repentance and pardon. And so we may turn to these epistles to extract a brief view of them and their relation to the evangel of the Circumcision.

The Hebrew epistle. Many are the details to which we could turn. Briefly: that which the Lord began, which those who heard Him confirmed, and God corroborated (2:3,4). This ministry to Israel had emphasized that the slain One was their King. But now they are shown that their avowal was related to the Apostle and Chief Priest, Jesus, over the house of God (3:1). They are urged to hold to this avowal (4:14). This Chief Priest, unlike those of the Levitical Priesthood, had sat down in the holiest (10:12). Here is the intimation why He had not returned as

announced by Peter. Their avowal was a foundation (6:1) for maturity; the maturity is that which comes under the new covenant (10:14).

The law perfected nothing, yet the law is being transferred, as also the priesthood. They are pointed to the glories of the Melchisedek Priesthood, related to a more perfect tabernacle. Now that they have such a Priest they are introduced to a better covenant and better promises. They have now a Priest according to the power of an indissoluble life. The law is to be imparted to their comprehension and inscribed in their hearts. Like the worthies of old, whose faith was not requited, they were to hold to their avowal.

Now they have a living way into the holy places and may approach with a true heart, in assurance of faith, and hearts sprinkled from a wicked conscience. Jesus, by His own blood, has hallowed them. And, like the sin offering burned without the camp, so He suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem. They are to carry His reproach. He, though He sat down, will yet appear the second time, apart from sin, for salvation through faith.

Peter's epistles: The standpoint is that of one who heard the Lord when on earth. It is addressed to expatriates dispersed by the persecution in Acts (8 and 10). It seeks to encourage their faith amidst further persecution. They are reminded that they are chosen to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (1:2, Heb. 12:24). These matters speak to them of the covenant and the mercy seat (Ex. 24:8, Lev. 16-14). They are regenerated to a living expectation (1:3), of incorruptible seed (1:23). The allotment in the land may have faded, but they have a living expectation of an incorruptible and unfading, allotment (1:4). This expectation will become a salvation to be revealed in the last era (1:5). Though sorrowed by present trials, yet glory and honor awaits them at the unveiling of Jesus Christ (1:7). Endurance gives grace with God (2:20).

Their salvation is related to the seeking and searching of the prophets, who told of the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow (1:10-12, Mt. 13:10). The sufferings they were enduring were the outcome of the sufferings Christ endured, for they were Christians.

Peter reminds them that they are living stones of the spiritual house. They were an holy priesthood (2:5). The Stone, a corner capstone, has been rejected by Israel's builders (2:7), yet these believers are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a procured people (2:9). In making known the power and presence of the Lord Jesus, Peter had not followed wisely made myths (2 Pt. 1:16), but had declared that of which they were spectators (1:16). And this is further confirmed by the prophetic word, which is a lamp appearing in a dingy place. They were to confirm their calling and choice; under no circumstances to trip -as had the nation of Israel (Ro. 11). A rich entrance will be supplied into the eonian kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pt. 1:10- 11).

These considerations, though largely confined to one side of the matter, stress that one immediate objective of the evangel of the Circumcision is to lead forward to the glory of the Hebrew prophets. Later Israel will come to the cross of Christ, but that is in the New Creation. Then there will be no Circumcision nor Uncircumcision.

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