

2020-2021 Bible Study

#29

5/4/21

Reminder

- We will not meet for Bible Study on **May 18**

Review of our Last Class

- Last class, we concluded our study of the **Book of Acts** with Luke's presentation of Paul's journey to Rome (59-60 AD)
- We then began an overview of the "**Captivity Epistles**," believed to have been written while Paul was in captivity in *Caesarea* for over two years, (57-59 AD) or in Roman captivity for two additional years (60-62 AD)
- We identified these as his **Letter to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians** (plus his brief letter to his friend *Philemon* concerning a runaway slave)
- Paul was arrested in 64 AD and eventually martyred in 65 AD
- We briefly discussed, as an aside, how many Protestant scholars have rejected the Old Testament, and most of the New Testament and a declaration that the Captivity Epistles were **Deutero-Pauline** and not written by Paul ¹

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- As Catholics, we have always believed that these letters were written by Paul
- We then began an overview of Paul's **Letter to the Galatians** where he preached against the prevailing attitude among the Gnostics over "secret knowledge" and dualism
- We also were made aware that Paul introduced his "theology of suffering" in these letters
- Then, we looked at Ephesians¹ where Paul discussed the importance of Confirmation to offset the demonic influence in Gnosticism ²

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- We also saw how Paul began the church of *Ephesus* but at this point, it had grown to the point that he was writing in general terms rather than to specific individuals
- He also pointed out the baggage the Jews and the Gentiles brought with themselves upon entering the Church

Ephesians 2

Ephesians 2

- **Ephesians 2:1-5** *“And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespass and sin in which he loved us,...and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”*
 - Once again, Paul was telling them that these things will happen “through Jesus Christ”
 - Further, that it was God who made them alive together with Christ, as they went from death to life
 - It was by His grace that they were saved
 - Father pointed out that this did not happen at a Protestant altar call! (Protestants love this passage)

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- Paul, unfortunately, does not make a single reference to baptism at this point
- We know from **Romans 6** and **Galatians** that we are raised from the dead in Jesus at our Baptism
- All who are baptized in Christ have put on Christ (**Galatians 3:27**)
- They died with Him, were buried with Him, and were raised with Him in the newness of life, so they will never die again
- If one was united with Christ, he will inherit a resurrected body someday like His (**Romans 6-8**)

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that the problems arise because people do not read or understand what Paul is talking about in **Romans**, or read it carefully, and conclude because he does not mention baptism that he is not talking about baptism
- Unfortunately, this is not very logical

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 2:6-7:** *“And he raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places ... in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*
 - Father asked his listeners: Where was the body of Christ at that moment?
 - It was with the Father in Heaven!
 - This meant, according to Paul, that if you were a part of the body of Christ, then you were “with the Father”
 - Father said that this was a part of Pauline spirituality and prayer
 - When we pray, we are praying as Christ with the Father

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 2:8-9:** *“For by grace you have been saved through faith,...not because of works, lest any man should boast”*
 - Father reminded us again that when Paul spoke about works, he was talking about the *Torah*
 - This passage is the longer version of his statement (the shorter version simply says: *“Works of the Law”*)
 - Father pointed out that this seems to be the same as the Lutheran concept of “faith vs. works”
 - Father explained that if one takes it out of context and turns it into a bumper sticker, you could see it the Protestant way
 - But, when in context, it becomes very un-Lutheran

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 2:10-12** *“For we are his workmanship, ...having no hope and without God in the world”*
 - Again, when Paul began talking about “works,” he was speaking of (circumcision and the kosher laws)
 - Here, he was saying that faith in Jesus means being baptized into Him
 - If one has faith in Jesus, you will do what Jesus’ followers say and do, and what Jesus said to do, then you will be baptized and saved (one does not need circumcision and kosher to be saved)

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 2:13-16** *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ....thereby bringing the hostility to an end”*
 - Father asked that we underline “in Christ”
 - We get “in Christ” by being baptized into Christ
 - When Paul speaks of “by the blood of Christ,” he is speaking of His death and resurrection (in which you have been made one with Him in baptism)

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 2:14-22** *“For he is our peace,...God in the Spirit”*
 - The “law of commandments and ordinances” was the *Torah*
 - As in **Romans 8** (a new creation), one is reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus, and that occurs at your baptism
 - “Far off and near” meant to the Jews and the Gentiles
 - When Paul speaks of “to the Father,” he wanted them to understand that they did not need to go to the local mystery cults to learn a bunch of little secrets

Ephesians 2 (Cont)

- He was telling them that all knowledge had been revealed in the name of Jesus
- He was saying that they did not need to worry about intermediary little spirit beings because Jesus was above everything
- Jesus was in God and served as the mediator between God and man (Jesus was both God and man)
- Therefore, there was no need for the *Ephesians* to seek spiritual things that would help them learn all that secret stuff

Ephesians 3-4

Ephesians 3

- **Ephesians 3:1-3** *“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...as I have written briefly”*
 - Father pointed out how Paul referred to being a prisoner, in captivity
 - This passage seems to be a bit impersonal and one can read his statement that he assumed that the reader had heard this in two ways:
 - He was being impersonal because the Church in *Ephesus* was so big that the majority of the people did not know Paul personally
 - He intended this to be a circular letter to be passed around the different churches in the region of Ephesus

Ephesians 3 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that *Ephesus* was a major central regional city and many churches (not founded by Paul) grew from it throughout the region
- Paul was addressing “mystery” at this point because there were many “mystery cults” in the region ³
- So, Paul was constantly talking about Jesus as “the mystery,” who possessed all knowledge of God

Ephesians 3 (Cont)

- Father suggested that when we read through these Epistles, we will see and hear Paul dealing with the same old issues to include circumcision and kosher laws
- Since most of these churches were primarily made up of former Gentiles, Paul decided to go beyond those issues (especially since he most likely had given them the Letter from the Council)
- They probably had a copy of his **Letter to the Galatians** as it was in the same region
- Father said that the main themes he was dealing with were the things that a Gentile church would have been dealing with: Gnosticism and a refutation of the secret knowledge

Ephesians 3 (Cont)

- Paul taught the *Ephesians* all they needed to know about Jesus to include that he:
 - Was an intermediary being who was both God and man
 - Was raised from the dead as they will be raised from the dead (demonstrating the importance of their bodies and the earth)
 - United the spiritual world and the material world (heaven and earth)
- Father said that these Captivity Letters were designed to catechize these Gentile Christians out of their spiritual rut

Ephesians 5-6

Ephesians 5

- **Ephesians 5:21-26** *“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ... husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”*
 - Father said that this passage is a classic example of this teaching
 - It meant that husbands were to love (Agape) their wives as Christ loved (Agape) the Church
 - He called them to be willing to give their lives for the sake of their wives and families
 - A good father spends his whole life working and doing whatever he can for the betterment of his wife and kids

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- He would even be willing to “sacrifice for them”
- Further, the wise wife submits herself to her husband as the Church submits to Christ
- This is a passage that is often read at weddings in both the East and West

Ephesians 6

- Paul's teaching on parents is followed by his advice for children directing them to be obedient
- He gave a similar message to how slaves were to respond to their masters
- Father gave an overview of how slavery in the first century was different from American slavery ⁴
- Many people were enslaved for many reasons, but they were treated more like family servants with a great deal of freedom
- It was more like indentured servants 100 years ago in England
- Eventually, the concept of slavery disappeared from the Christian world

Philippians

Philippians

- The **Letter to the Philippians** is listed right after the **Letter to the Galatians** in the New Testament
- The Church in *Philippi* was Paul's favorite church
- He visited it a number of times including on his second and third journeys
- The congregation always supported him and even sent a care package with *Epaphroditus*, a member of the community to support Paul in his imprisonment in Rome
- *Epaphroditus* got sick and almost died, and upon his recovery Paul sent him home with his **Letter to the Philippians**
- The tone of the letter was very personal and thankful for their support, but still contained an exhortation over some of Paul's concerns for them

Philippians 3

- **Philippians 3:1-3** *“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord....For we are the true circumcision, who worships God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh”*
 - Father reminded us of what Paul said to the *Galatians* concerning the “circumcision party”
 - His minor challenge to them was concerning a caution about circumcision and practicing Kosher
 - Father concluded that the letter is easy to understand and we should read it on our own

Colossians

Colossians

- The city of *Colossae* was a generally Gentile city in the region of *Phrygia*
- It must have had a large Jewish population as it was one of the places mentioned in **Acts 2:10** concerning those Jews visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost
- Therefore, this church may have been seeded by the *Colossians*, who returned from Pentecost
- It was not founded by Paul
- *Epaphras*, a disciple of Paul, became one of its leading members

Colossians (Cont)

- During Paul's first Roman captivity, *Epaphras* visited Paul in Rome and provided some good and bad news concerning the state of things in that region
- This bad news seems to have been the catalyst of Paul's exposition on the faith in the first two chapters
- There are indications that the *Judaizers* had moved into that region teaching the need for Sabbath observances, feast-days, and dietary regulations
- There was also an interest in spiritual powers, angelic beings, and their mediatorship, possibly an early form of Christian Gnosticism

Colossians (Cont)

- Paul responded to these issues in this letter which was delivered by *Tychicus* and *Onesimus* (who also carried a letter to his former master *Philemon*, a resident of *Colossae*)
- Father suggested that we read this letter on our own looking at Paul's criticisms of Christian Gnosticism and dualism to include:
 - Physical world bad; spiritual world good
 - Jesus united heaven and earth
 - The earth was good
 - An attack on the Judaizer heresy

Colossians 2

- **Colossians 2:9** *“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily”*
 - Once again, Paul points out that Jesus was not an intermediary angelic being as He is God
 - Father said that Paul was stressing the divinity and humanity of Jesus
 - He continued to stress that Jesus was above everything else
 - He keeps stressing this because one of the problems was thinking that He was one of the intermediator types

Colossians 2 (Cont)

- **Colossians 2:10-12** *“and you have come to fullness of life in him,...who raised him from the dead”*
 - Father asked, When did we come to the fullness of life in Him?
 - Some would say that this came about at our baptism
 - Father said that if we stop right there we do not understand Pauline theology
 - Further, we were “circumcised with Christ,” when we were buried with Him and raised with Him in Baptism
 - Father said that this was central to Pauline theology as well as Christian theology

Colossians 2 (Cont)

- For many, Baptism is only seen as one of the things one does as a Christian
- Father then asked and answered a series of questions 5
- Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist cause one to be, in the end, a fully recreated being
- Not only spiritually but physically as well
- Spiritual resurrection comes via Baptism and Confirmation while physical resurrection will come at the end of time

Colossians 2 (Cont)

- As Adam died spiritually by eating the forbidden fruit, and later his body died, so we are raised from the dead spiritually and will later on be physically raised
- We must start by understanding what happened in the Garden of Eden in order to fully understand what Paul was saying here

Philemon

Philemon

- This sort of letter was apparently written about the same time as Paul's letter to the *Colossians*
- It is about an escaped slave (*Onesimus*) who belonged to *Philemon*, a friend of Paul's in *Colossae*
- After *Onesimus* arrived in Rome, he met Paul in prison where he assisted Paul in his captivity
- We do not know if he was a Christian before he met Paul but whatever the case, he was identified by Paul as his son
- After some time, Paul decided to send him back to his master (*Philemon*) in *Colossae* asking him to accept him back as a fellow Christian

Philemon (Cont)

- This short letter gives us insight into Paul's thought about slavery and the importance of converting both slaves and their masters
- Although accepting the principle of slavery in the first century, Paul hoped after conversion, a master would treat his slaves like his own sons and slaves would see their master as their father
- He hoped that masters would eventually release their slaves
- Unfortunately, slavery was a part of the first century economy

Philemon (Cont)

- Father said that it is important to understand that there was no condoning of slavery in Paul's epistles
- This letter is helpful as it gives us a sense of how Paul dealt with slavery on a personal level when he talked to a slave master