

**FUNDAMENTALS**  
**and the**  
**MYSTERY**

Charles H. Welch

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# FUNDAMENTALS and the MYSTERY

A REFUTATION OF THE CHARGE,  
THAT THEY WHO HOLD TO THE 'PRISON EPISTLES'  
DO NOT TEACH THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH

by

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*Dispensational Truth*  
*The Apostle of the Reconciliation*  
*The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner*  
*Parable, Miracle and Sign*  
*The Form of Sound Words*  
*Just and the Justifier*  
*In Heavenly Places*

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### THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

The Prison Epistles are the only Scriptures which reveal the dispensation of the Mystery, and as that glorious truth is the peculiar burden of our ministry (see *The Berean Expositor*), we have placed great stress upon these special epistles. They are five in number, but as Philemon is personal in character, we often speak of the 'Four prison epistles', meaning by this statement that these contain the complete revelation of the Mystery. Now two false conclusions have been drawn from our emphasis upon these epistles. One circulated by a well known speaker in Ayrshire \_ where we were taking meetings \_ was that we have no room for such an epistle as the 'Romans'. This is completely refuted by the publication in 1948 of the book entitled *Just and the Justifier*, and whether the charge is made out of ignorance or malice it is misleading in the extreme. We do most certainly distinguish between the doctrinal teaching of Romans, such as 'justification by faith', which is as true for the church of the Mystery as it was when first written, and such dispensational teaching as 'the Jew first' of Romans 1:16, or 'the olive tree' of Romans the eleventh chapter, which teaching has no relation to the church of Ephesians, being truth for the time then present.

Another charge against us is that by 'shutting ourselves up' to the four epistles we have neglected the Fundamentals of the Faith and so are a source of weakness if not of positive harm to others. Again an appeal to the list of our writings will show that a conspicuous place has always been given to the Old Testament Scriptures, and that such fundamentals of the faith as Redemption, Atonement, The Deity of Christ, The Inspiration of Scripture, the Second Coming, Hell, The Soul, and kindred basic themes, have been given a most careful exposition. In this present article, however, we accept the limitation falsely attributed to us, and confine ourselves to the four prison epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy, to discover what fundamentals of the faith will be absent from our creed by so doing.

What shall we say is the basic truth of all? If we reply redemption, or the Person of Christ, or the Purpose of the Ages, shall we not have to admit that we should know nothing of these things, apart from Scripture? And by this admission must we not agree, that the Fundamental of Fundamentals is the Truth of Scripture? That being the case, we turn to our imaginary opponent, and ask him the following question:

'If you were asked to give a proof text for the infallibility, truth and accuracy of the Scriptures, and were limited to one reference, where would you turn?'

There is only one reply, 2 Timothy 3:16 :

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'.

From other parts of the New Testament we may learn that the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), that the Old Testament Scriptures testify of Christ (John 5:39), that they must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54,56; Luke 4:21; Acts 1:16) that no Scripture is of 'its own unfolding' (2 Pet. 1:20), but if we want a specific testimony to the great question of INSPIRATION we must leave the Gospels and Acts and all other epistles, and turn to the prison epistles, namely to 2 Timothy 3:16. We do not deny that by collecting together all that the Scripture says of itself, that we should not attain to the truth made so clear in 2 Timothy 3:16, what we seek to show is, that it is to this *prison epistle*, that all must turn if they would read the one specific statement concerning the 'Inspiration' of Scripture.

While we do not limit ourselves to these epistles, but use the whole range of inspired truth for our learning, we do call upon all who have any sense of fairness to rebut this charge, that by emphasizing the prison epistles as we do, there is any likelihood that we should or could neglect or deny this fundamental of our faith. Anyone who may have been disturbed by these false statements made by those who do not see the truth of the Mystery, will realize that they have no need to fear and nothing to lose by closely following the testimony of the Lord's Prisoner.

### SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Having discovered that the great basic doctrine of our faith, namely the Inspiration of all Scripture, is found in the prison epistles, we now turn to the fundamentals which belong to the gospel. If those who have falsely charged us with neglect of the fundamentals really appreciated the distinctive purpose with which these prison epistles were written, they would realize that in accepting this challenge we are purposely handicapping ourselves, for the very reason that these epistles *assume* that salvation is a present possession, and that the Gospel has been believed.

Consequently, were there no definite statement concerning Salvation or Redemption or the Gospel in these four epistles, it would be no more true that those who hold to them and study them were negligent of these basic truths, than it would be true to charge a teacher of a class of believers with the same neglect because he did not preach the gospel to the unsaved when teaching the saved some further truth concerning their calling or walk. In spite of this very real possibility, we have no need to fear that any one can sustain the charge that we do not know and do not teach in the plainest terms Salvation by grace.

If 2 Timothy 3:16 contains the plainest statement to be found concerning the Verbal Inspiration of Scripture, Ephesians 2:8-10 must take front rank with any revelation given of the gracious nature of salvation.

`For by grace are ye saved	<i>Grace</i>
Through faith;	<i>Faith</i>
And that not of yourselves:	<i>Not of self</i>
It is the gift of God:	<i>Gift</i>
Not of works,	<i>Not of works</i>
Lest any man should boast.	<i>No boasting</i>
For we are His workmanship,	<i>His work</i>
created in Christ Jesus unto good	<i>Created</i>
works, which God hath before	<i>Ordnained by God</i>
ordained that we should walk in them'.	<i>Works and walk</i>

Here are ten items, which, if taken separately give seven positive statements that emphasize the freeness of the grace, and the creative power of God in the gospel, and three negative statements that entirely rule out human merit, and if taken together present as complete a doctrine of salvation as can be found anywhere in the same compass. Added to this is the balance instituted that reveals that, while works of any kind have no place as a procuring cause of salvation, good works do most definitely come in as fruit. Here then that great fundamental, Salvation by Grace through Faith, finds a very full expression in the prison epistles.

#### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The epistle to the Romans is the epistle of Righteousness. A righteousness of God by faith is declared to be the very power of the gospel of Christ (1:16,17); this righteousness is said to be not of works, and not by the law (3:20,21), but is a righteousness of God (3:22), a righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ (3:22) unto all and upon all them that believe (3:22), while Romans 8:1 reveals that this state of freedom from condemnation is `in Christ Jesus'.

In the exposition and proof of these statements, eight most weighty chapters of doctrine are occupied (Rom. 1 to 8), together with the three dispensational chapters (9 to 11). The reader who is familiar with these basic chapters is invited to attempt the reduction of this doctrine of righteousness within the shortest space commensurable with lucidity and completeness. If this attempt be honestly made before reading further, we are sure that a comparison of one's own effort with one single verse in Philippians 3 will cause the reader to recognise how fully and simply the apostle has summed up his doctrine in that `Prison Epistle'.

`And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by Faith' (Phil. 3:9).

Here in this brief statement we learn that righteousness is found `in Him'; it is not `my own', it is not `of the law' but that it is through the `faith of Christ' and `by faith' in Him, and that it is a righteousness `of God'.

No one who draws from the prison epistles either his doctrine or his practice, will teach or do anything that is not in full accord with the great fundamental `Justification by Faith'. This is the third fundamental that is fully recognised by the epistles of the Mystery, the two considered previously being:

The Inspiration of Scripture.  
Salvation by Grace through Faith.

### REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

If righteousness is essential to man's acceptance with God, it can only be ours because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). The false and misleading charge which we are meeting in this booklet is that by insisting as we do, upon the importance of the prison epistles, we are in danger of neglecting the Fundamentals of the Faith. We have already seen that the Inspiration of Scripture, Salvation by grace through faith, and Justification through faith, are most fully stated in these epistles of the Mystery, and we now turn to the related fundamental 'Redemption by the blood of Christ'.

*Apolutrosis*, the Greek word translated redemption, is used specifically of the redeeming work of Christ five times in the New Testament, of which number of occurrences two are found in the prison epistles, which is a very large percentage indeed. Four other occurrences refer to the future, one of which occurs in Luke 21:28, one in Romans 8:23, and two in Ephesians, namely in 1:14 and 4:30. Consequently there are more references proportionately to redemption by the blood of Christ in the prison epistles than in any other section of the New Testament.

Critics of Dispensational Truth speak as though we teach that the glorious doctrines of 'spiritual' blessings and 'heavenly' places were independent of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, but this is false. Let us put the matter to the test, and commence reading Ephesians. We do not read more than six verses before we come to the words:

'In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded towards us' (1:7,8).

Here, be it observed, redemption is not left unexplained. It is definitely said to be 'through His blood'. Next it is declared to be 'the forgiveness', or the setting free from sins. Thirdly, this redemption and this forgiveness, is because of the abounding grace of God. This doctrine is repeated in Colossians 1:14, where the deliverance extends to the authority of darkness and effects a translation into the Kingdom of the Son of God (Col. 1:13). The prison epistles teach that the believer:

is 'Redeemed' by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1: 14),  
 is 'Made nigh' by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13),  
 has 'Peace' by the blood of Christ (Col. 1:20).

Again we say, a close adherence to the prison epistles does not and cannot mean a neglect or disbelief in the fundamentals of the faith. The charge that has been circulated is shown to be false, and can have but one origin, even though they who circulate the report may think that they do God service.

### THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Closely allied with the redemption of Christ, is the doctrine of the cross. If it be true that 'the cross is the touchstone of the faith' then the prison epistles stand out prominently in their testimony to this vital truth. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that the cross is never mentioned in Romans, except in the reference 'the old man is crucified with Him' (6:6). It therefore follows that they who hold to the teaching of the prison epistles must emphasize the teaching of the cross, more than they who make Romans their standard! Paul's epistles fall into two groups. Those written before Acts 28, and those written after. There are three epistles of each group that reveal the doctrine of the cross; 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews on the one side, and Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians on the other. The glorious truth associated with the cross of Christ in the prison epistles is as follows:

*Reconciliation.* The word used in Ephesians 2:16 is more complete than that found in the earlier epistles of Paul, and speaks of 'the two' who have been 'created one new man' and as 'one body' reconciled to God 'by the cross'.

'Peace' is associated with this full reconciliation in Colossians 1:20 and such is its depth, it goes down to those who were once 'alienated and enemies ... by wicked works' (Col. 1:21).

`Cancellation' of every ordinance, rite, or ceremony, whether found in the law of God, or imposed by the tradition of man is found in the cross of Christ. The believer who realizes the truth of Colossians 2:14 is free beyond words, and finds that for him indeed Christ is all, and in His fulness he stands complete.

The cross of Christ has another message beside the redemptive side of His great sacrifice. This we find in such expressions as `take up his cross' or `endured the cross'. The prison epistles supply an exposition of this somewhat neglected aspect of the doctrine of the cross, in the teaching of Philippians. The cross itself is not actually mentioned in 2 Timothy, but the doctrine of the cross, namely `suffering and reigning', is prominent. So in Philippians 2:8 we have the cross as the lowest point of the Saviour's humiliation, before the corresponding exaltation, and in chapter 3 where we read of `the out-resurrection' and `the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus', we read of those whose walk made them `the enemies of the cross of Christ'. Once again therefore the charge that the close study of the prison epistles tends to a neglect of the fundamentals is not only demonstrated to be false, but a neglect of the prison epistles must mean ignorance of some aspects of vital truth.

### THE RESURRECTION

In our last heading we looked at the references in the prison epistles to the cross of Christ. We remember, however, that the same epistle in which the apostle says that he determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him *crucified*, (1 Cor. 2:2) makes it clear that without the *resurrection*, Christ died in vain (15:12-19). The epistles of the Mystery are pre-eminently the epistles of the Risen Christ.

The first great prayer of Ephesians 1:18,19 has as its third item:

`The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead' (Eph. 1:19,20).

In the epistle to the Philippians the apostle makes it his prayer:

`That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection' (Phil. 3:10).

In the epistle to the Colossians the completeness of the believer's acceptance in Christ is associated with the resurrection:

`Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead' (2:12).

The second epistle to Timothy places emphasis on the resurrection of Christ, for the apostle says:

`Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel' (2:8).

The historic fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead is the testimony of the four prison epistles. Moreover, the blessed association of the believer with that resurrection is a vital part of the doctrine of the epistles of the Mystery.

`And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6).

`If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God' (Col. 3:1).

Further, whether the believer who is addressed in these epistles looks forward to the blessed hope of his calling, or whether he eagerly pursues the equally blessed prize of the same calling, he knows from their teaching that there is no such thing as passing straight into glory apart from resurrection. He may be looking forward to enjoying all `spiritual' blessings but this does not dispense with the need for a `body', for Philippians 3 says:

`We look for a Saviour, Who shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory' (3:20,21 author's translation).

The power which alone will enable one to run the race with the `prize' in view, is `the power of His resurrection', and is associated with attaining unto `the out-resurrection', out from among the dead (Phil. 3:10,11).

It is utterly impossible for anyone to believe the testimony of the Lord's prisoner, and not to hold fast the great fundamental doctrine of the Resurrection. Without that glorious fact there could be neither salvation, nor heavenly sphere, nor prize of the high calling, for all depends upon the Resurrection, Ascension and present Exaltation of the Saviour.

#### THE PERSON OF CHRIST

We have here examined the prison epistles for their testimony of the fundamentals of the faith and have found six most important doctrines most fully established in these epistles. We have not yet considered their testimony to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and this must be our immediate concern. Speaking of the Lord, Paul says in Philippians:

‘Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men’ (Phil. 2:6,7).

The same apostle writing to the Colossians said of Christ:

‘Who is the Image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature ... the firstborn from the dead’ (Col. 1:15-18).

Here are statements that are equal to any that may be found outside the prison epistles for the wonder of their teaching.

The Saviour's Deity is stressed, but so also is His manhood. These highly spiritual epistles which turn the believers thoughts away from the earth, and speak of principalities and powers, heavenly places, and even spiritual foes, give no uncertain sound as to the human nature of the Lord.

‘Having abolished in His flesh the enmity’ (Eph. 2:15).

‘In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy’ (Col. 1:22).

‘For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily’ (Col. 2:9).

Does John in his Gospel, or Paul in Hebrews teach that the world was made by Him, or that the heavens are the work of His hands? (So also <sup>\*</sup>) Colossians tells us that ‘by Him all things were created, that are in heaven and that are in earth’. Is it the testimony of other Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, Ephesians 4:13 (also<sup>\*</sup>) places ‘the knowledge of the Son of God’ as the goal of the faith. Is it the testimony of other epistles that this same Jesus is Lord? (So also<sup>\*</sup>) Philippians 2:9-11 reveals the fact that the Saviour is highly exalted and that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Is He the Saviour? Philippians 3:20 says we look for Him as such. Is He Master? Believing masters upon earth are reminded of the title of the Lord in Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 4:1. The glory of these prison epistles is the exalted Lord, and they who believe and hold to their teaching cannot help but bow in His presence and say with perhaps fuller meaning than did Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God’. The Lordship of Christ is most fully testified in these prison epistles. The central feature of the sevenfold unity of the Spirit is the ‘One Lord’ (Eph. 4:5). There is a distinct recognition of the Lordship of Christ in the change over from doctrine to practice in Ephesians. In chapter 3, where the doctrine of the epistle is still in progress, Paul calls himself ‘The Prisoner of Jesus Christ’ (Eph. 3:1), but the next time he refers to himself under that title is in the practical section with its exhortation to walk worthy, and there we find the words ‘The Prisoner of the Lord’ (Eph. 4:1).

Service is particularly directed to the Saviour in His capacity as Lord, and from Him reward and censure alike must be expected:

‘And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ’ (Col. 3:23,24).

In his last epistle, the apostle says:

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\* The words in brackets have been added to the original work to assist the reader in following the author's exposition.



'Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner' (2 Tim. 1:8).

There are no less than seventeen references to the 'Lord' in this short epistle.

They who hold fast to the testimony of the Lord's prisoner will never be led away into denying or neglecting the Lordship and the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but will ever bear their testimony that:

'Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.

#### THE FATHER

The revelation of the Father is the peculiar feature of the New Testament, and any belittling of this most gracious title of God must be looked upon with the gravest concern. The epistle to the Ephesians contains eight references to the Father as follows:

(Eight occurrences - Resurrection)

A 1:2 Grace ... and peace, from God our Father, and ... the Lord Jesus Christ.

B 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C 1:17 The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.

D 2:18 Access by one spirit unto the Father.

D 3:14 I bow my knees unto the Father.

C 4:6 One God and Father of all.

B 5:20 Giving thanks ... unto God and the Father.

A 6:23 Love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The character of the Church of the Mystery opens with praise to the Father:

'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' (Eph. 1:3,4).

It is evident from these words that the blessedness and choice of this church results from the sovereign will and love of the Father, and places the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God first in the fundamentals of the faith as taught by the epistle to the Ephesians. It is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of glory to Whom prayer for enlightenment in the truth of the mystery is addressed (Eph. 1:17), and it was His mighty power that raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and set Him at His Own right hand (Eph. 1:19,20).

The goal of our salvation, the expression of our acceptance, the hall mark of the new man is revealed in the privilege of access:

'For through Him we (the) both have access by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. 2:18).

We are fully aware that in this verse, as in others that we quote, the Father is not alone in the transaction of grace. Here for example is a verse which must be referred to under the three headings (1) The Father \_ to Whom access is granted; (2) The Son \_ through Whose sacrifice this access is alone possible, and (3) The Spirit \_ in Whom 'the both' now made one, draw nigh. There is no intention to ignore such wondrous revelation, we are simply pursuing one theme at a time, which at the moment is the testimony of the prison epistles to the doctrine of the Father.

The Apostle's own example in the matter of prayer is one that should be followed by all the people of God.

'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 3:14).

Direct prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is rare in the Scriptures. When one is being stoned to death, as was Stephen, and to whom a vision of Christ has been made (Acts 7), rules that govern the church in normal circumstances may not apply. Prayer direct to the Lord Jesus instead of honouring Him, really sets aside the

necessity for His present mediation at the right hand of God. He Himself taught His disciples to say 'Our Father'. The unity of the Spirit which the Church of the Mystery is enjoined to keep is another passage which testifies to the three persons in the Godhead, one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:6). We refer to it here because of its emphasis upon the place of the Father in this seven-fold unity which the church of the Mystery must keep.

The fundamental doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the preservation of that doctrine from misuse, as in the conception 'the Universal Fatherhood of God' are alike found in the epistle to the Ephesians, and it is impossible for any one who sincerely believes the prison epistles to neglect, to underestimate or to overstate this wondrous revelation.

#### THE SINFULNESS OF ALL MEN

It is one of the fundamentals of the faith that 'all have sinned' and that 'there is none righteous, no, not one'. We should expect this note to be struck with emphasis in such epistles as that to the Romans, where the intention of the Apostle is evidently to place before the reader the great scheme of Salvation. From the nature of the prison epistles, the object of which is to make all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery, and from the character of those addressed, namely, 'saints and faithful in Christ Jesus', the Apostle was under no necessity to introduce so basic a truth as the universal sinfulness of man. Had he never mentioned the subject, it could not have been construed as either neglect or denial, for the prime object of his writing was to deal with higher things. However, we are accepting for the purpose of argument, the idea that we do limit ourselves for doctrine to these prison epistles, and we are supposed by so doing to neglect or deny many fundamentals. What is the state of the case so far as the doctrine of the fall of man is concerned? The Apostle assumes the presence of sin in all his readers, by the early introduction of redemption by blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). He leaves us without doubt in Ephesians 2 for he draws an awful picture of the ordinary manner of life of his hearers 'in time past'.

'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others' (Eph. 2:2,3).

This passage alone would be enough to prove the sinfulness of all men and the impossibility of salvation except by grace. Further on, the Apostle draws another picture of the dispensational distance of the Gentiles, and there we find them 'without Christ', 'without hope' and 'without God' (Eph. 2:12). Again in chapter 4 he says:

'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' (Eph. 4:17-19).

There is only one other passage that compares with this terrible picture of Gentile degeneration, and that is the latter half of the first chapter of Romans. The Apostle does not hesitate to assume that some who were then members of the church, had been thieves (Eph. 4:27), and warns the church itself against gross immorality (Eph. 5:3-5). In Colossians we learn that the members of the Body of Christ, were once:

'alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works' (Col. 1:21).

The list of wickedness given in 2 Timothy 3, where Paul describes the perilous times that are coming, is nothing more or less than an indication that the horrors of the days of Nero are to be repeated at the close of this age, for there is almost a word for word repetition of Romans 1:29-32.

The false idea that the world will get better and better is denied by the Apostle who says on the contrary:

'But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived' (2 Tim. 3:13).

Here we have the ninth fundamental of the faith, fully attested by the prison epistles. Some readers may wonder why we have not quoted Ephesians 2:1 in this article. We might have quoted it and have strengthened our case, but to have done so, would have been dishonest on our part. Elsewhere we have shown that Ephesians 2:1 teaches that the church is dead TO trespasses and sins, not IN them, and consequently we have left that passage out. The

fundamental doctrine of the universal sinfulness of man however, is abundantly attested by the references we have brought forward.

#### LIFE AND IMMORTALITY

One of the fundamentals of the faith, and one that lies at the root of all blessing is the glorious doctrine of 'Life only in Christ'. The epistle to the Romans declares that 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:23). Is it true that if our doctrine is drawn from the prison epistles, we shall hold vague ideas regarding this matter of life and death? The first passage we meet in the epistles of the Mystery reveals the utter necessity that life should be a gift and in Christ, for in Ephesians 4:18 we read that the Gentiles were:

'Alienated from the life of God',

and if this be the condition of man, life must either come from outside of himself, or he must utterly perish.

The next reference is found in Colossians 3 and there we read:

'Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3).

Here therefore is the evidence of a mighty change. The believer has died, yet lives. We find from the same epistle that he 'died with Christ' (Col. 2:20), and now we see that a new life is his, that life being hid with Christ in God.

From the last epistle of the apostle Paul, we learn that this gift of life was the subject of a promise, and by comparing the passage in this epistle with others, we learn that this promise goes back before age-times:

'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 1:1).

'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (age times)' (Tit. 1:2).

This leads us to 2 Timothy 1:9-11:

'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (age times), but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles'.

At His first appearing, the Saviour made manifest the glorious gift of life, and at His second appearing that life and immortality will be entered and enjoyed:

'When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear (be made manifest), then shall ye also appear (be made manifest) with Him in glory' (Col. 3:4).

Those who believe and hold to the testimony of the Lord's prisoner, will have no hesitation in believing the glorious truth that life is the gift of God and found only in Christ, and they will be fortified against the spiritualistic error that immortality is the inherent possession of all men. They will know that 'life and immortality' is brought only by the gospel and is not the common possession of the sons of Adam.

As we have pursued our way through this series we have found our hearts going out in praise to Him, Who in such a small compass, and with quite a different object in view, could so inspire the Apostle when he wrote these prison epistles as to include so much testimony to fundamental truth.

We conclude this little booklet with an outline of the four prison epistles.

**Structure showing their distinctive doctrines  
and their interrelation.**

Key Words

- |   |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A | Ephesians<br>Seated<br>Together   | The dispensation of the Mystery (3:2,3<br>and 9 R.V.).<br>The church which is His Body (1:22,23).<br>The Fulness (1:23; 4:10). The Head (1:22).<br>Principalities and powers (1:21). |
| B | Philippians<br>The Prize          | Try the things that differ (1:10 margin).<br>Strive (1:27). Press toward the mark (3:14).<br>Prize (3:14). Depart (1:23). Offered (2:17).                                            |
| A | Colossians<br>Complete<br>in Him. | Dispensation of Mystery (1:25, 26).<br>The Church which is His Body (1:24).<br>The Fulness (1:19). The Head (2:19).<br>Principalities and powers (1:16; 2:10).                       |
| B | 2 Timothy<br>The Crown            | Rightly divide the Word (2:15).<br>Strive (2:5). Course Finished (4:7).<br>Crown (4:8). Depart (4:6). Offered (4:6).                                                                 |