

All spiritual blessings.

#1. A criticism of the term “super-heavenly”. pp. 29 - 31

The reason for which *The Berean Expositor* exists is to make known the special revelation of God’s grace to the Gentiles during this dispensation of the mystery, and, in harmony with this intention, is the fact that, during a period of fourteen years, the epistles to the Ephesians has been given a systematic study. Its words have been examined, its structure discovered, and some of its heights and depths acknowledged, though they remain unscaled and unfathomed. The fact that we have brought this serial exposition to a close does not mean that henceforth the epistle to the Ephesians is a shelved book, but rather that now the analytical study has been concluded the more spiritual study may begin. There are many wondrous and mighty themes that have been dealt with verbally that need a closer consideration now that the spade work has been done. The house is built, the furniture is in place, and we must now move in and take possession.

A question that lies at the very threshold, and one that seriously colours the whole of our present life here on earth, is, In what way are “all spiritual blessings” a present possession? Is Satan, together with Principalities and Powers, at this moment, actually and merely potentially, beneath the feet of the believer? Are we now, at this moment, actually “seated together in the heavenly places”? Is the new creation already our present, personal enjoyment? Can we, by virtue of union with Christ, Who is at the right hand of God, and by the operation of the law of the spirit of life, can we command the withdrawal from our sphere of disease, the curse, and the limitations associated with the presence here of sin and death? Is our attitude to be one of “reigning”? Should we speak of our position as “on the throne”? These, and such like questions, are not inventions of the writer; they are actually propounded by many earnest believers, and in many cases the answer has been, that all these things are ours here and now.

It has been the aim and the prayer of those responsible for this magazine to stand for all the truth of God for His saints, and therefore these questions challenge the very object for which we exist. It is our intention, by the grace of God, to consider these and similar points in this series to which we have given the title, “All spiritual blessings”.

Closely allied with “all spiritual blessings” is its sphere, “heavenly places”. This sphere we have considered in its place, and have seen that there is a threefold sphere of blessing in the purpose of God: (1) the earth, (2) the heavens, and (3) the heavenly places, far above all. For this third sphere we have used the term “super-heavenlies” in recognition of certain scriptural facts connected with it. While we believe most readers appreciate the fitness of this expression as embracing in itself the scripturally-revealed features belonging to it, some have nevertheless challenged its appropriateness. We therefore feel that in this introductory article the true meaning of “in heavenly places” and the suitability of the term “super-heavenlies” should be considered.

Super-heavenly.

This term seems to one to be a straining of words to the subverting of those who hear. This is a sufficiently serious charge to require refutation and brings us into line with the apostle who although he took with becoming meekness the criticism of his “contemptible speech” and his “mean appearance”, yet when his apostleship or his doctrine was attacked threw himself into the breach and yielded subjection “no not for an hour” that the truth of the gospel might continue right through to ourselves. The criticism in question begins by stating the following fact, and this fact is the basis of our teaching on the subject.

“*En tois epouraniois*. This expression is peculiar in its form to the Ephesian epistle, where it occurs five times; i. 3 and 20; ii. 6; iii. 10; vi. 12.”

After having made this statement the critic opens up his view on the subject by a quotation from John iii. 12, and says, following the quotation, “(lit., heavenlies, as in Ephesians)”.

Now there is something amiss here. If “in heavenly places” is *peculiar in this form* to Ephesians, it cannot also occur in John iii. 12. The word “heavenly” is used all over the N.T., a fact that it would be foolish to deny, and which has no bearing on the subject. Our contention has been that *this peculiar form*, “in heavenly places”, has been used by God in Ephesians alone, because Ephesians reveals the mystery which, alone in all departments in the purpose of the ages, makes it known that a company of the redeemed shall one day enter into their inheritance “in the heavenly places far above all principalities and powers”.

That the significance of the peculiar form found only in Ephesians is seriously questioned by our critic is revealed by the second item of criticism. Speaking of the term “super-heavenly” it is stated that:--

“There is no such word in the New Testament as *huper-ouranios*, that is ‘above or beyond the heavens’.”

To this the obvious answer is that in Eph. iv. 10 we have the words, *huper ano panton ton ouranon*, “far above all heavens”. This shows that while the actual term “super-heavenlies” may not be found, “super-heavens” is in the very heart of the self-same epistle associated with the self-same ascension, “far above all”, with which the church of the one body is inseparably connected.

Can the logic of these two passages be denied?

“The Lord Jesus ascended to the *heavenly places*” (Eph. i. 19-21).

“The Lord Jesus at the same time ascended *far above all heavens*” (Eph. iv. 10).

The word used in Eph. iv. 10 is *hyper-ouranon*; therefore “heavenly places” are “super-heavenly”.

We really feel grateful for this criticism, for its investigation has proved, up to the hilt, the reality of the peculiarity of the position in Ephesians.

The problem that is connected with the fact that the throne of God, Principalities and Powers, even wicked ones, are alike spoken of as “in heavenly places” has been dealt with in Volume II & III, new edition, page 105 (Volume III original edition, page 56), and a difficulty connected with the usage of *ouranos* in Col. i. 5 is dealt with in Volume XVI, page 126.

We rejoice that God in His grace has not given us a place in the “heavenly city” that *comes down from God out of heaven*, but that, with fullness of thanksgiving, we can say:-

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. i. 3).

#2. “Spiritual blessings in heavenly places.”

pp. 72 - 75

The expression “heavenly places” occupied our attention in the first paper of this series; in this we turn to the equally important item, “All spiritual blessings”. These blessings are “in heavenly places”—a definite locality “far above all”; but while we are there, in spirit, we are nevertheless still waiting for the redemption of the purchased possession, so that the enquiry as to whether these spiritual blessings can be enjoyed, in their full meaning, until the whole church enters into its glorious inheritance is a very real one.

If these blessings are enjoyed now by members of the One Body, and if these blessings are their everyday experience, it would be reasonable to expect that throughout the epistles of Paul written for this company, there would be references to them. The fact is that whatever the reason, the words “to bless” and “blessing” (*eulogeo* and *eulogia*) occur nowhere else in the prison epistles other than in Eph. i. 3.

The section in which they occur has to do with the plan and purpose of the Father made before the overthrow of the world. There is no mention of sin and death, redemption or forgiveness, and the “acceptance” which is ours in the Beloved is, strictly speaking, “high favour”. Here in fact is the Father’s will. Until we reach the time appointed by the Father, we must not presume that we are of age or have entered into our title. This is the lesson of Gal. iv. 1-10, which has a bearing on the point as we shall see by the reference to the “adoption”. Those blessings that are ours by *purpose* (Eph. i. 3-6)

become ours by *purchase* (Eph. i. 7 and 14). Until we reach the day of redemption, the “seal” and the “earnest” must be our blessed portion.

Spiritual.

Have we been led astray by the present-day use of the word “spiritual”? If this means a state of mind that combines the qualities of piety, unworldliness, and Christ-likeness, a mind and walk that is in harmony with Scripture and pleasing unto the Lord, how comes it that the whole of the O.T. could be written, such characters as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Daniel described, and the word “spiritual” never be necessary? Only once do we find the word in the O.T. Hosea says, “The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad” (Hos. ix. 7). The correspondence here between “the prophet” and “spiritual” shows that Hosea refers to those who, under the influence of the Spirit, spoke to the people. This means that the word “spiritual” is virtually absent from the O.T.

It is never wise to omit a reference to the LXX version when dealing with the O.T. Accordingly we look to see whether *pneumatikos* (spiritual) is used, and, if so, how. There is no need for search; the word never occurs. Instead of translating Hos. ix. 7 by this word, another is used, which in Zeph. iii.4 stands for “light and treacherous persons”. It is clear therefore that “spiritual” blessings and “spiritual” persons mean something very different from that usually intended by those who use the word to-day. Such expressions as “the deepening of the spiritual life” and “spirituality” are not in accord with the scriptural meaning of the word.

The epistle to the Ephesians uses the word of “blessings”, but also of “wickedness” (i. 3 and vi. 12). These expressions moreover coincide with the first and the last occurrences of the phrase “in the heavenlies” that are to be found in Scripture. It is therefore folly to omit their comparison. If the believer has blessings in heavenly places, which are described by the same word as that which describes “wickedness”, it is evident that the word does not mean piety, godliness, unworldliness, or Christ-likeness, but has reference to nature or condition. These beings are “spiritual” though “wicked”.

The meaning of the word is made clearer when we discover its opposite or alternative. Take for example the “light” in II Cor. iv. In verse 6 its opposite is “darkness”, but in verse 17 its opposite is “weight”, which settles any ambiguity that might have existed. In Eph. vi. 12 the opposite to “spiritual” is “flesh and blood”. Our foes are not human, but belong to a higher order, which for the moment we might call “angelic”. All spiritual blessings therefore must be interpreted in the light of the usage of that term and not “spiritualized” away. The use of the word in Rev. xi. 8: “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt”, shows that it can have no reference to “spirituality”, for these cities were notoriously wicked, but indicates to us that “spiritual” blessings are “real”, whereas present pilgrim blessings—like the manna in the wilderness—are but “figures of the true”, but “earnests” and foretastes of the glory that awaits us at the right hand of God.

In Rom. xv. 27 the word “spiritual” is used in opposition to the necessities of life. “If the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things” (Rom. xv. 27; *see also* I Cor. ix. 11). In I Cor. ii. 13-15 and xv. 44-46, spiritual things are placed over against natural things. These natural things have to do with the “soul”, and Adam as he was created. It is the risen Christ, as the last Adam, Who as the “life-giving spirit” introduces “spirituality”.

It is opposed to a “fleshly” condition in Rom. vii. 14, and used of “gifts” in Rom. i. 11; I Cor. xii. 1; xiv. 1; the wilderness provision in I Cor. x. 3, 4; “songs” and “understanding” in Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 10, and i. 9; and of “persons” in Gal. vi. 1; and I Cor. xiv. 37.

The Corinthians were carnal, divided, and to them the apostle said: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (I Cor. iii. 1). Here “spiritual” is opposed not only to “carnal”, but to the condition of being “babes”. By comparing Heb. v. 8 - vi. 1 with I Cor. ii. and iii. we find “spiritual” used as a parallel with “perfect” and opposed to “babes”. A babe in Christ may be very godly, very Christ-like, but, according to this usage, would not be “spiritual”. One more comparison with Heb. v., vi. and I Cor. ii., iii. makes us see that when the Church does reach the “perfect man” with its measure of the “full age of the fullness of Christ”, it will be then, and then only, able to enjoy “spiritual” blessings.

Spiritual and heavenly.

There is one other passage that throws light upon Eph. i. 3. I Cor. xv., a chapter that is devoted to the theme of resurrection, we read: “There are heavenly bodies (*epourania*), and earthly bodies (*epigeia*) there is a natural body (*psuchikon*), there is also a spiritual body (*pneumatikon*) (I Cor. xv. 40-44). Here we learn that a “spiritual body” and a “heavenly body” are parallel terms, which leads to the conclusion that “spiritual” blessings in “heavenly” places can only be enjoyed when we possess a “spiritual” and a “heavenly” body. This appears upon the surface of Eph. i., as we believe we shall be able to show when considering the references to the words “adoption”, and “earnest”.

Our conclusion is that the spiritual blessings that are ours according to the Will of the Father, and ours by reason of the redemption of Christ, and ours by reason of the earnest and the seal of the Spirit, will be ours in actual personal possession in that day when we shall attain unto the “purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. i. 14).

In another paper we must give attention to the other side of the question, namely, What are our possessions while here on earth?

#3. A guiding principle discovered by the analogy of Scripture. pp. 186 - 191

In our former papers we sought to show that “super-heavenly” was warranted as a translation of *epouraniois* in Eph. i. 3, in the light of i. 20, 21 and iv. 10. We suggested that while all spiritual blessings were most truly ours “in Christ”, they were not yet ours “in heavenly places”, for the good reason that we were not actually there; but that what we did possess here, while we walked by faith yet still held by mortality, was the earnest of our inheritance, “until the redemption of the purchased possession”, “unto the day of redemption”.

In this connection a passage in Rom. viii. is sometimes quoted: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. viii. 19). This must not read as though the sons of God were manifested now, for verse 23 shows that not only does the creature wait, but “ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body”. The sons of God will be manifested, as such, at the resurrection, but till then they, too, must “groan” and “wait”.

Ephesians tells us that we have “the earnest”, not the full inheritance at present; Rom. viii. 23 repeats the thought by describing us as having “the *firstfruits* of the Spirit”. Now the firstfruits were by no means the harvest, but a small pledge or earnest of the harvest yet to be. Christ Himself is the “Firstfruits of them that slept” (I Cor. xv. 20). Their resurrection is *assured*, and they may, even now, rise and walk in newness of life, but they dare not teach that “the resurrection is past already”, for such would be serious untruth (II Tim. ii. 17, 18). The word “manifestation” in Rom. viii. 19 is *apokalupsis*, and it can easily be seen that just as the Lord Jesus is not yet “revealed”, but is “expecting” (Heb. x. 13), so also must we, though sons of God, wait with earnest “expectation” for that day of revelation (Rom. viii. 23). Not only so, but Rom. viii. 24, 25 proceeds to remove any idea that the “revelation of the sons of God”, or “the redemption of the body” obtains now, by saying:--

“For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, *why doth he yet hope for?* But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience WAIT FOR (expect) it.”

An O.T. illustration.

It may throw light upon the subject if we refer to a notable illustration of the principle underlying the scriptural answer to the question before us. It is provided by Abraham. Heb. xi. 8 tells us that when Abraham was called to leave Ur of the Chaldees, he knew that the place to which his steps were directed was to be his inheritance, yet he was an

old man and his wife an old woman by the time they received the promise of a seed. Rom. iv. and Heb. xi. 12 tells us that so far as parenthood was concerned Abraham and Sarah were “as good as dead”, and Abraham’s faith is most definitely declared to be faith in God that “quickeneth the dead”. Abraham knew most intimately the meaning of the words of Rom. viii. 11, in the quickening of the mortal body even before the actual and literal resurrection.

Quickened, but not raised and ruling.

But though Abraham got thus far, farther even than most of us can truthfully claim to have reached, yet observe the remarkable sequel. He had actually entered into the land of his inheritance, he had walked through the length and breadth of it, he had lifted up his eyes northward, southward, eastward, and westward (Gen. xiii. 14-17), and, as a direct sequel to this anticipatory possession, had refused “from a thread even to a shoelatchet” from the hand of the king of Sodom who was under heavy obligations to him (Gen. xiv. 21-23). He had met another king, even Melchisedec, and the truth associated with that typical king-priest, as taught in the epistle to the Hebrews, prevented Abraham from accepting “dominion” over the Canaanite or the king of Sodom. It rather led him to refuse all such anticipation, in the light of a deeper revelation made known to him.

The faith that awaits God’s time.

Stephen draws attention to the deeply significant fact that although Abraham entered the land of promise in faith, nevertheless God “gave him *none inheritance*, no, not so much as to set his foot on, *yet* He promised that He would give it to him for a possession” (Acts vii. 5). The only piece of land that Abraham actually possessed was the field of Ephron and the cave of Macphelah, which he bought and paid for with 400 shekels of silver as a burial place for his wife (Gen. xxiii. 3-20). His own description of himself in that transaction was: “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you” (Gen. xxiii. 4). The reply of the Canaanite was: “Thou art a prince of God among us none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre” (Gen. xxiii. 6). Who spoke the truth for the dispensation then obtaining? Abraham or Heth?

Some of our friends would have taken Abraham very seriously to task for his attitude. They would have demanded the operation of the law of the spirit of life over against the law of sin and death, and claimed the field of Ephron as a rightful possession. They would have considered the payment of the 400 shekels of silver as much a betrayal as the receiving of the shekels later by Judas himself. Yet Abraham was right. Hear the inspired comment:--

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, *as in a strange country*, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same possession These all died in faith, NOT HAVING RECEIVED the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the land” (Heb. xi. 9 and 13).

Two reasons for waiting.

Two reasons are given for this renunciation; one in Heb. xi. and the other in Gen. xv. The first is that the Lord revealed to Abraham the glory of the heavenly city: "For he looked for a city they desire a better country, that is an heavenly He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 10-16). This was something more than the inheritance originally promised. It became, to Abraham, what the prize of the out-resurrection becomes to the members of the One Body, which is also vitally associated with a heavenly citizenship (Phil. iii. 14-20). Abraham was well content to wait, to let his moderation be known to all men, to live as a pilgrim and a stranger in the land of his inheritance that he might reach out unto the prize made known to him.

Would it not be a steadying thought if members of the One Body realized that this present life is a blessed opportunity of suffering and enduring with and for Christ, "if by any means" a larger share in the glorious ministry soon to be set up may be entered upon? When you are tempted to ask, "What is the purpose for which I am here?" do not omit the possibility of qualifying for the highest of all service, that which is associated with the prize of our high calling. Those who see in Phil. iii. nothing more than a spiritual attainment in this life, differ essentially from our interpretation; the prize will never be attained apart from real conformity to the death of Christ; to such the literal and special resurrection will come as a very blessed event.

The second reason why Abraham was not, in his own lifetime, to inherit the land of promise was revealed to him as recorded in Gen. xv. 16: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Abraham knew that he would die (though the Lord blessedly adds, "in peace"), and be buried in a good old age. He knew that his seed would go into bondage, and that they could not enter their inheritance for at least another 400 years. By consulting Deut. ii. 12-37 we see the beginning of the movement that ended in the possession of part, at least, of the land of promise. For us, the Amorite living in Canaan is but a type of the principalities and powers, the spiritual wickednesses that are in heavenly places, that still retain a hold upon their forfeited place. The iniquity of these spiritual Amorites is not yet full, and so we too must patiently await the day of redemption, which shall deliver us from a bondage worse than that of Egypt (Rom. viii. 19-25).

Had Abraham walked seven times round the walls of Jericho, the walls would not have fallen down flat; he would simply have exposed himself to ridicule, and the name of God to blasphemy. In Gen. xiv. 13 we find Abraham at peace with the Amorite, and his only battle for the rescue of his nephew Lot. When Joshua entered the land, however, nothing less than the utter destruction of the Amorite was required. Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec, king of Salem, when he returned from the slaughter of the four kings that had attacked Sodom. Joshua numbered among his enemies Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem, who, joined by four other kings, was put to death. No miracle is recorded when Abraham rescued Lot, but a stupendous miracle, a veritable "sign in heaven" is recorded in Josh. x. 1-14. It was enough that Abraham delivered Lot from the hand of the enemy; but Joshua bade the captains of Israel come and put their feet upon the necks of the captive Canaanite kings.

The conquest of the land under Joshua has a place in the typical teaching of Scripture for the believer now, and in so far as he enters by faith into his position with Christ, so will his realization of victory be more complete. But to act and to pray as though the day of redemption had come, and the redemption of the body were an accomplished fact, is to be under the spell of a falsehood, and must lead to disaster. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Rom. viii. 37) is an incomplete quotation, and is often made to mean the very opposite of the truth. The full quotation is as follows:--

“For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, IN ALL THESE THINGS we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.”

The burden of the passage is that none shall separate us from the love of Christ, neither “tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword”, “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. viii. 35-39). It is in this sense that we are more than conquerors, not in the sense of making a conquest over our enemies, Some take the stand, that seeing they are in Christ, and a part of a new creation, members of His body, and “far above all” it would be a sign of lack of faith ever to feel the stress of persecution, the shame of nakedness or the peril of the sword. Not so the apostle. It was the carnal Corinthians that made the boast that they “reigned as kings”. The apostle said: “I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you” (I Cor. iv. 8). Then follows that unparalleled list of suffering for Christ:--

“God, I think, displayed us last as condemned criminals, a theatrical spectacle to the world, both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye strong; ye glorious, but we dishonoured. Up to this very hour we both hunger and thirst, and are ill-clad, and are buffeted, and are hustled from place to place, and toil, working with our own hands; being abused, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being reviled, we entreat; as refuse of all things are we become the offscouring of all things till now” (I Cor. iv. 9-13).

The true dominion is seen here. Not in boastful and carnal “reigning”, as the Corinthians, but as the apostle in meek enduring. Paul reveals the spirit of the conqueror, the true king, the real dominion. When being reviled, he can *intreat*, when abused, he can *bless*. “In all these things” he is “more than conquerors” through Christ. During this present life dominion of the character of reigning on a throne is not experienced. Rather are we left as pilgrims and strangers, though joint-heirs with Christ. The position is that of those graciously allowed (Phil. i. 29, Gk.) to share the sufferings of Christ, while confidently looking forward to the glory. When we triumphantly exclaim (I Cor. xv. 55-57), “O grave, where is thy victory? . . . thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ”, we do not delude ourselves with the idea that we are no longer mortal, neither do we act as though death is for ever removed from us. It would help us if we remembered that Christ did not die to save us from *dying*, but to save us from *death*, and to apply this fact to the two phases of experimental redemption, the present, with its limitations, and the future, with its “liberty and glory”.

Let us ponder the two reasons given in Heb. xi. and Gen. xv. as to why Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the seed of promise could all die *in faith* NOT HAVING RECEIVED.

The adoption and the earnest.

In Rom. viii. the Spirit of adoption is spoken of as “firstfruits”, and firstfruits is the earnest of future harvest. In Eph. i. we have adoption as the great feature in the Father’s will, and the Spirit of adoption, given while we walk by faith and wait patiently, is not called the Spirit of adoption, but “the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession”. The inheritance is future, the adoption, or “placing as sons”, is future; the earnest of it is the Spirit of promise, the Spirit whereby even now we cry, “Abba, Father”.

Another phase of our adoption is expressed in Eph. iv. 13:--

“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 fullness of the Christ.”

This is the Ephesian parallel with Rom. viii. 29: “conformed to the image of His Son.” The power that worketh in us is the mighty power which wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead. It enabled Paul to say: “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God.” Paul, however, was under no illusion. He knew the outer man was perishing. He knew what suffering meant. He did not “claim” any exemption from these things, but he was more than conqueror in them all.

The day of redemption, which is the day of adoption, has not yet come. Let us beware lest by any excess of zeal we say that “the resurrection is past already”. We have the earnest, the leading of the Spirit of God, the indwelling of the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. We have the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For the freedom from the bondage of the elements of the world we are unfeignedly thankful. In the bestowal of the spirit of freedom from the bondage of corruption we rejoice, and for actual and literal emancipation from the bondage of corruption we confidently wait. Let us not miss the fullness of the earnest, which *is* our present possession, by vainly assuming a position that is ours only when the day of redemption shall have come.

As an appendix we give the following quotation from *A historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, by *W. M. Ramsay, D.C.L.*:--

“The idea that they who follow the principle of faith are sons of Abraham, whatever family they belong to by nature, would certainly be understood by the Galatians as referring to the legal process called, *huiiothesia*.”

“Adoption was a kind of embryo Will; the adopted son became the owner of the property, and the property could pass to a person that was naturally outside the family only through his being adopted. The adoption was a sort of Will-making; and this ancient form of Will was irrevocable and public. The terms ‘Son’ and ‘Heir’ are interchangeable.”

“An illustration from the ordinary fact of society, as it existed in the Galatian cities, is here stated: ‘I speak after the manner of men’. The Will (*diatheke*) of a human being is irrevocable when once duly executed. But if Paul is speaking about a Will, how can he say, after it is once made, it is irrevocable?”

“Such irrevocability was a characteristic feature of Greek law, according to which an heir outside the family must be adopted into the family; and the adoption was the Will-making. The testator, after adopting his heir, could not subsequently take away from him his share of the inheritance or impose new conditions on his succession. The Roman-Syrian Law Book will illustrate this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son, and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth; yet it is so. The expression in Gal. iii. verse 15, ‘When it hath been confirmed’, must also be observed. Every Will had to be passed through the Record Office of the city. It was not regarded in the Greek law as a purely private document. It must be deposited in the Record Office.”

If the reader will read Gal. iii. 15 - iv. 7, and Eph. i. 13, 14 in the light of this Galatian usage of adoption, it will be seen how utterly impossible it is for any subsequent law, sin or forfeiture to deprive the heir of the full benefits of this adoption “when the time appointed by the Father” arrives. We do not omit from our reckoning that which

finds no place in the Greek law, namely, that manifestation of love in the gift of the Redeemer. This only makes God's adoption the stronger.

The parallel between Gal. iii. and Eph. i. on this point is so important as to justify a little repetition:--

“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal. iii. 17).

Paraphrasing this passage in the terms of Ephesians, we can say:--

“And this I say, that the predestination unto adoption and the choice in Christ by God, before the overthrow of the world, the law of sin and death that entered into the world by one man, Adam, at a later period, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”

In both cases we have the outworking of a purpose that knows no change. In both the provision of a Redeemer. In both the shutting out of works of merit. In both the simple ground of faith. In both a period when the child, though “lord of all” or “far above all”, is nevertheless under tutors and governors (the word “governor” giving us the word “dispensation” of Eph. i. 20, iii. 2, and 9 R.V.) until the time appointed, until we all arrive at the perfect man. In both the freedom we possess now is manifested in deliverance from ordinances (Gal. iv. 9, 10; Eph. ii. 15; Col. ii. 16).

We wait for adoption. We wait for resurrection, the redemption of the body, the day of the redemption of the purchased possession. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us.”*