

Original Contributions.

The Church at Ephesus.

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Sec. II. begins at chapter iv: 25.

It includes the *particula s* of Paul's grand and instructive exhortation.

1. The contrast between right and wrong are specially noted. There is scarcely a vice known to the human family but is here directly branded by the apostle. Those which he does not name are minor in character, or they are the lineal decedents from those which he designates. All of these he would have us put away, and whoever follows his advice will find there is much rubbish to be cleared out before his house is swept and garnished.

2. The apostle just as positively specifies virtues to take the place of the old habits and vices. There is no virtue calculated to bless mankind and make each one a blessing which this epistle does not embrace.

3. It is specially adapted as a guide to the man in the toils of practical every day life. It does not require a philosopher to see the difference between what the gentiles were and what God would have them be. There is, indeed, a great gulf between a wicked and a righteous life. No man or woman can be a close student of the Bible, or even this epistle, and remain a very wicked person; and no one who does not study its precepts can be a righteous individual. It is only by giving the most earnest heed to the teachings of the holy writ that a wicked man becomes a righteous man.

4. A consistent Christian life demands that men shall avoid evil thoughts, words and deeds. These are negative things which God prohibits. Therefore wicked men must first learn to observe God's prohibitory decrees, which requires them to forsake their way—cease to do evil and then learn to do right. I will not affirm which is the easiest for a man to do; but one thing is certain, no man can succeed in doing good until he forsakes the evil. Therefore the apostle exhorts us to cease lying and speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are all members one of another. The object of a lie is to deceive. To deceive a man is to do him injury, and in this you injure yourself. It may be safely affirmed

that no man can injure himself without damage to others, and no man can injure others without detriment to himself. Therefore men should not sin through anger, nor let the sun go down on their wrath, nor give opportunity to Satan. To make an honest living and be a benefit to others, in bestowing good things upon them, the thief must quit stealing. This shows that liars and thieves can reform, and I Cor. vi: 9, 11, shows that even worse characters than these obtained mercy.

But this reformation of life embraces other items; Christians must not use corrupt discourse, "but if any speech be good for the use of edification, speak it, that it may impart a benefit to the hearers." Language is our means of communicating with our fellow men. Therefore, since it is wrong to injure ourselves or our neighbors, our speech should be always used for their benefit. Speech is thoughts expressed. And all the good or evil that men do, they do in properly or improperly using their thoughts in words and actions.

5. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." I understand by this that we are not to express dissatisfaction at what the Holy Spirit has revealed, nor weary or tempt him to reveal or provide more or less than what he has so fully bestowed. Jesus told the tempter: "Thou shalt not tempt (or test) the Lord the God;" and just before this Jesus said: "Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," viz: by all the *means* which God has provided. Hence, since the Father provides all, the Son brings all, the Holy Spirit offers it for all, abundantly richly. Therefore, to ask for something not provided, or to express dissatisfaction with some things, and ask an amendment or a repeal, or to ask his help in our weakness while failing to use remedies already offered to us would be to grieve, if not to weary and tempt the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, this is forbidden because his already ample means are provided, whereby we are sealed till the day of redemption. If I am wrong here, I hope some critic will enlighten me with a full exegesis of the text.

6. The apostle further specifies all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking, with all malice to be put away. This is certainly very plain. Does any one fail to

understand this? Then, in addition to this important clearing away of evil, we are to be kind, tenderhearted and forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake, forgives us. Therefore, followers of God, as beloved children, walking in love, even such as Christ exercised in giving himself an offering, sacrifice to God for us. To this end God's word is our only safe guide. It alone reveals his will and points out the way of life.

7. The apostle next condemns whoredom and all uncleanness and inordinate desire. He not only forbids the practice of these things, but as topics of conversation, and with that all foolish talking of things unwanted, or of no benefit. But rather giving of thanks. I know we can't help thinking, and people will talk, but they can and should guard their thoughts and words and keep them upon proper things.

8. No fornicator, unclean person, nor lascivious man, who is an idoliter, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. Because of these evil things God's wrath comes upon the disobedient. We, therefore, ought not to be deceived with vain speeches by any one, and partake with them to our ruin. These Ephesians were once in darkness, and all of us were in that state long enough. In the Lord we are to walk in the light as children, and the result will be the fruits of a consistent life consisting of all goodness, righteousness and truth, approving what is well pleasing to God. Having no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but being a continual reproof to them. It is base to mention the secret doings in darkness.

Is it Not a Little One.

I have often wondered at the temerity of Lot after he had received a warning from the Lord to leave the city of Sodom; and, at last, after much parley, had been led by the angels, and "set without the city," and commanded, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed;" that at such a time, after so signal a bringing forth from danger and impending doom, he could still parley with the Lord as to the choice of a location, when he had already specified the place of safety. And Lot said, "Oh, not so, my Lord, behold now thy servant hath found favor in thy sight,

and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take me and I die. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; Oh, let me escape thither (Is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." Gen. 19: 17-20.

Just without the doomed city, not yet fully escaped from danger, he dared counsel with the Most High, and choose for himself a place, disregarding the Lord's appointing; and the Lord listened to his importunities, and granted his request. But mark the result. He had feared to go to the mountain the Lord had appointed, lest some evil befell him, but before he reached the place of his own appointing, his wife was lost to him forever, and was left upon the plain a monument of God's justice to the disobedient. Afterward, when he had determined in his own mind to go up to the mountain, unguided, another humiliation awaited him.

But as life's experiences are brought out to our spiritual view, by trial of our own weaknesses, we find that this same prayer is often uprising from our own hearts, "Is it not a little one?" Sometimes we feel the spirit's call to go up to some mountain heights of experience, the duties for which, in our own estimation of our capabilities, we are wholly inadequate to perform; and to our minds are pictured all the difficulties of the way, magnified.

We can think of others whom we think are just fitted for the place, but we are so weak! We look at the instrument which the Lord has chosen, instead of the mighty hand upholding, and querying, we exclaim, "Is it not a little one?" and, like Lot, feel that we can not go up lest some evil befall us (or the cause), and remain in the low atmosphere of the plain, rather than obey and go up to experience the exhilarating sensation greeting those who scale the mountain peak of obstacle and duty, and with whom the Lord goeth up. For if we go in the way of God's appointing, he will go with us; and the loftier the mountain scaled through difficulties, remembering the sacredness of God's upholding, the clearer and more far-reaching the view of the country lying just beyond, and which greeds not the eyes of those content to tarry on the plain. And how very often the enemy suggests a little lapse