

through faction or pride. Such unity and fellowship based on the revealed will of God will bear the fruits of holy living, liberal service, regularity in obedience in the lives of the redeemed. In this way alone can they be a worthy habitation of God in the Spirit.†

Cled E. Wallace



We are now meeting in the conference room at the Microtel Inn each Sunday morning!

Bible Study: 9am

Worship service: 10am

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“The Christian Report”

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RED OAK CHURCH OF CHRIST

THE GUIDELINE

Psalms 31:3

THE HABITATION OF GOD

The people of God are “fitly framed together” and constitute “a holy temple in the Lord.” This is a divine sanctuary “which the Lord pitched, not man” and was built “for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” The members of the body of Christ should ponder often and well the divine honors they bear, the grace that is theirs. They have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of Christ and God. Their state has been changed from one of alienation and enmity to that of reconciliation and peace. *“So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”* (Eph. 2:19-22.)

Strangers and sojourners are aliens, essentially outsiders. When the Jews were God’s people, in the country that God gave them and under the law that God revealed to them, there were some provisions governing aliens who came in as strangers and sojourners, but they were not “the people” and the land and the law were not theirs. Human beings in this gospel age have definite rights as such even though they be enemies of God and walk in darkness. God has not left himself without witness to them in the abundance of natural blessings placed within their reach. These blessings are not sufficient to make them “fellow-citizens with the saints” or a part of the sanctuary in which God dwells in the Spirit. It takes even more than can be denoted by such a term as morality to do that.

The apostle is not vague in defining the status of those fortu-

void the grace of God or improperly exalts the church, knows too little of either the grace of God or the church. Paul's teaching regarding the church as the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, and the place where reconciliation is enjoyed forms the climax of his argument on grace. "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Gal. 6: 15.) It is the same as saying that if a man is a Christian, the circumstance of his race is of no importance. If he is not a Christian, no circumstance of race or blood can count in his favor with God. He is "a new creature" only in Christ, in the body, in the church. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17) "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) We can well understand in the light of all this why Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.) There should be no hesitation on the part of any to do as the Lord directed, and none should delude themselves with the fancy that they can enjoy the promised blessings in disobedience. "He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 9.)

In view of this plain teaching, it is no wonder that we find an expression like this in the sacred writing: "Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." (Eph. 3: 21.) Christ is the fullness of God and the church is the fullness of Christ. A man cannot honor God and ignore Christ, nor can he honor Christ and ignore the church. It was built "for a habitation of God in the Spirit." The members of the church, the body of Christ, are addressed in this inspired language: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him whom called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter 2: 9, 10.)

This calls for unity among the Lord's people and they should give all diligence to maintain it. They should speak the same things, be perfected together in the same mind and judgment and do nothing

and read the entire second chapter of Ephesians. An overwhelming fact presents itself which is in itself a eulogy on divine grace. It makes no difference at all about a man's past, or a woman's either. Those who are "dead through your trespasses and sins" who live "in the lusts of the flesh" and are "children of wrath . . . having no hope and without God in the world" may be raised up with Christ, saved through his grace and exalted in heavenly places with him to share "the exceeding riches of his grace." There is no handicap in an ugly past if a correct present attitude can be attained. The responsibility is put right up to the alien. He can flee the past and become a citizen and a fit dwelling place for the Spirit of God if he chooses to do so. God has through his grace made the provisions, the alien must look upon them and make the choice.

In their relation to God, aliens are "far off," citizens "are made nigh." This nearness to God bringing peace and all the blessings of salvation is found "in Christ Jesus" and through "the blood of Christ." (2 Cor. 5: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself") (19.) This reconciliation is enjoyed in the body of Christ which is the church of Christ. It is specifically stated that Christ took the law of Moses out of the way because it stood as "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles. God did not propose to have a dwelling place of Jews or Gentiles as such but one consisting of the redeemed of all races. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10: 12, 13.) So when Judaism fulfilled its mission and was abolished in the blood of Christ, a new order was established, "a new and living way," a far better way than Judaism could be at its best. It is amazing with what tenacity many clung to the old order. The Jews could not be saved by the law of Moses and the Gentiles were not under it. They did not have anything even as good as Judaism. When the church was established, expressed by the apostle as the creation of "one new man," the new and better way was to "reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." This simply means that Jews and Gentiles alike were saved, and are saved, in the church. Any one who imagines that this makes