PathLights

April 28, 2019

Escape

by Frank Himmel

The English word *escape* comes from an old Latin compound word composed of *ex-*, "out of," and *cappa*, "cape" or "cap." It therefore literally means to get out of your cape; that is, to leave a pursuer holding only your cape while you get away. We use the word primarily of either breaking free from confinement or control (e.g., escaping from prison), or of successfully avoiding something dangerous or unpleasant (e.g., escaping death). The New Testament has a good bit to say about escaping in the spiritual realm.

Our first concern must be escaping divine punishment. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). The righteous judgment of God calls for wrath against sinners—and that is all of us (Romans 3:23). Thankfully, He has provided salvation in His Son. It is the exclusive means. "And there is salvation in no other; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:13). Therefore, being Jesus' disciple is serious business; it calls for careful attention. "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

Escaping divine punishment involves several other escapes. It begins with escaping our captivity in sin. Sinners often see themselves as free, but in reality they are held captive by the devil to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26). Escape from that condition requires repentance and learning the truth (v. 25). Escaping the devil's hold on us also requires that we escape the world's thinking and conduct. Peter emphasized

the importance of escaping the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Peter 1:4), the defilement of the world (2 Peter 2:20), and those who live in error (v. 18).

Satan will not leave us alone when we escape to Christ. He will still tempt us. Nevertheless, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).
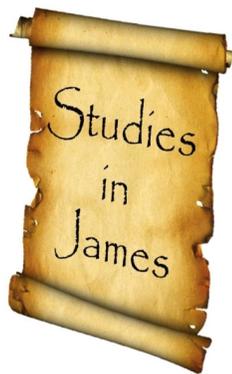
It is up to us to use the way of escape, and it is vital that we do so. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first" (2 Peter 2:20).

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25). ∎

Perfect Faith

by Frank Himmel

Faith is essential, yet not all faith is the same quality. The Bible talks about dead faith, worthless faith, shipwrecked faith, little faith, etc. In today's text, James describes perfect faith. Surely that is the kind we all want to have!

> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God (2:21-23).

Perfect faith begins by listening to God. Faith always comes that way (Romans 10:17). We may believe something God has not said, but when we do that is not faith; it is imagination or wishful thinking or self-will or stubbornness or something similar.

Perfect faith trusts what God says. Abraham believed God. That is remarkable because God said some remarkable things to Abraham. God promised that He would make Abraham great; that his family would become a great nation; even that he would become a blessing to the entire world. And God promised all that, even though Abraham was old and did not have any children. Abraham did not always understand how God would do what He said (Romans 4:19-20), but he took into account God's infinite greatness and believed He would (v. 21). Perfect faith does that.

Perfect faith does what God says. It trusts God's instructions just as surely as it trusts His promises. James illustrates that with perhaps the most difficult command God ever gave a man. Isaac was Abraham's son through whom God's promises were to be fulfilled. Yet at one point God commanded Abraham to take his beloved Isaac and go offer him up as a burnt offering! (Genesis 22:1ff). Was it logical? Was it reasonable? Did it not seem to be a contradiction to God's promises? Regardless, it was what God said, and Abraham promptly obeyed. The fact that God stopped Abraham at the last second in no way lessens the point. Abraham obeyed God.

Do not be deceived. Every effort to dismiss God's instruction—claiming that it is antiquated or it applied only in another culture or it makes little sense or it would be too difficult or for whatever reason it does not mean what it says—is unfaithfulness, not faith.

Perfect faith justifies. Abraham's faith was credited unto righteousness: it meets the condition upon which God forgives, making man righteous (Romans 4:5-8). James wants us to clearly understand that the kind of faith that justifies is working, obedient faith. "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone" (v. 24). Isn't it interesting that the only time the Bible uses the expression *faith alone* it plainly says we are **not** justified that way? No, we need perfect faith. ▪

Service Leaders for the Week		
	Sunday	**Wednesday**
GREETER	Howard Moore	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Albert Harrison Sr	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Steven Turner	
CUP	Justin Candella	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Jason Chandler
CLOSING PRAYER	Josh Baucom	Josh Baucom