

God's Precious Grottos of Repentance

Heb.12:17. *"For ye know that afterward, when he (Esau) would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears".*

Recently, while meeting with some friends in Tennessee, this passage of scripture was one of several read in our hearing. It was presented in it's general context, which warns of the dangers of harboring bitterness, and the potential it has of keeping us from our inheritance. Feeling as if there were something more the Lord wanted to convey to my heart concerning this idea of "a *place* of repentance", however, I took the time to ponder it. What was it that He wanted to show me?

It was not until a couple of days after we had returned home that the Spirit broadened my horizons on this. He explained this "place" to me by speaking a single word to my spirit, and that was the word, "grotto". Since this was a word which I had heard, but was not exactly sure of it's meaning, I consulted with Webster's Dictionary for help. What I discovered was fascinating, to say the very least. It gives the primary definition as, *a natural covered opening in the earth: (1): a cave typically picturesque and rocky and of limited size (2): a recess in a cave (3): a usually arched recess or hollow place (as in the side of a hill) making a natural shelter and formed by or resembling the mouth of a cave.* It comes from the Latin word *crypta* (meaning a vault or cavern), and the Greek word *krypte* (meaning a hidden, private, or secret place), from whence also we derive our English word, "crypt". Webster's Book of Word Histories also provides some interesting background information for the word, as well. It points out that during the Italian Renaissance, underground caves were discovered beneath the ancient city of Rome. The walls of these caves, or what became commonly referred to as the "*grotte*", were covered with exotic paintings of unusual subjects. For hundreds of years, these peculiar treasures, called in Latin, "*pitture grottesche*" (or, grotesque pictures), lay unnoticed by archeologists and historians. But once the grottos were discovered, exploration could be made, and their richly historical contents could be studied in detail.

What a perfect picture the Spirit portrayed in my imagination from this! Immediately I began to envision the scenario in Scripture. Heb. 11:3 states that "*through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God...*". The word translated "worlds" here is the plural form of the Greek word *aion*, and should more accurately be rendered "ages". This tells us that before the created realm ever came into being, God, in His omniscience, wisely designed the order by which it would follow. He laid out the blueprints for the ages, carefully arranging and foreordaining certain events to transpire during certain time-frames or eras, and planning certain things to occur during each of those appointed times. In fact, as He fashioned each stage of the material world according to the good pleasure of His will, He was also boldly declaring the end from the beginning. Though we will not go into a detailed presentation of it here, this may easily be seen by a study of Genesis, of what might be termed "creation week", Suffice it to say that by using "the Peter principle" (that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and

a thousand years as one day", II Peter 3:8), and by merely possessing a basic familiarity with the symbolic language of the Bible, anyone should be able to see that this is so. During the course of each millennial "day", history has successively followed the pattern (most notably, perhaps, was the emergence of "the greater Light" on the fourth day, which corresponds with the appearance of Christ as "the Sun of Righteousness" in the fourth millennium). In fact, we might say that history is just that... *His-Story*. Not only is it about Him, showing forth His glorious presence in every chapter and page of time; He is also it's divine Author... leaving His unique signature at the end of every line! It all makes for an interesting study!

Everything has it's appointed time of fulfillment, in the sequential order of God (Eccl. 3:1). Nothing is left to chance!

The same is true concerning the order of the *new* creation species. Whenever the process began in us of "*old things passing away and all things becoming new*" (II Cor. 5:17), this was not a chance happening. It only happened because God granted us privileged passage into His presence. Men sometimes speak of "finding God" (as if He were the one lost).. but the truth is, God found us! He revealed Himself to us precisely when He wanted; and regardless of how desperately we may have tried, we could not have found Him one moment before! "*No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him*" (in. 6:44). He called us into a place of repentance, "from the mouth of the cave", so to speak; and we entered into a glorious place of transformation which could never have been discovered without Him. Praise God for divine providence! (It was within the secret chambers of this "grotto", in His "gallery" of fine art, that we first caught a glimpse of "the Christ Collection"! On display were the characteristic images of our Lord, "*mighty to save*", as He ministered in mercy, in grace, and offering forgiveness to all mankind. We were so privileged to have been given the ability to see and to appreciate it! Only God could have opened the eyes of our understanding! For what might previously have appeared to us as a grotesque form of art (i.e. the cross) was now a thing of transforming beauty in our sight)!

In a personal sense, we might also say that *our* "ages" (spiritual infancy, adolescence, and adulthood) were likewise framed by the Word of God. In the beginning, He called us to Zion, to the foot of the mount; He laid out the path before us; and, knowing that we would need them from time to time, He also placed hidden "grottos" of repentance along the way. Ah, beloved, this is a part of the wonder of our God... not only has He declared *our* end from the beginning, purposing that we should ultimately ascend the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place; He was also perfectly aware of everything that would happen in between! He knew that that initial place of repentance would not suffice throughout our long trek up the mount; and so He very graciously provided opportunities for us to return unto Him as oft as necessity demanded, and as oft as we needed strength for the journey. Though it cannot be figured out by the natural mind (and though we are most undeserving of it), the holy mount is literally "riddled" with a vast network of these places of refuge... places where He restores our souls; places where our peace is renewed. The whole thing is almost too wonderful to fathom.. and yet, it is a beautiful reality!

How we rejoice in God our Savior, Who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12)!

"TRUTH IN THE GROTOS"

Throughout this present age, there has been an unfolding revelation of God's eternal (aionian) purpose which He purposed in Christ, and a progressive unveiling of His glorious plan of salvation for all mankind. Now, it is without doubt that these wonderful truths had always been in the mind of God, conceived long before the foundation of the world; but for four thousand years they were hidden from the eyes of even the most astute men in the Old Testament. Paul stated this, when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, ***"This mystery was never disclosed to human beings in past generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles (consecrated messengers) and prophets by the Holy Spirit... To me, though I am the very least of all God's saints, this grace was granted and graciously entrusted: to proclaim to the Gentiles the unending (boundless, fathomless, incalculable, and exhaustless) riches of Christ [wealth which no human being could have searched out], also to enlighten all men and make plain to them what is the plan [regarding the Gentiles and providing for the salvation of all men] of the mystery kept hidden through the ages and concealed until now in [the mind of/ God Who created all things by Christ Jesus"*** (Eph. 3:5, 8-9, Amplified). And again, he stated this same thing, when he wrote to the Colossians: ***"...I became a minister in accordance with the divine stewardship which was entrusted to me for you [as its object and for your benefit], to make the Word of God fully known [among you]-the mystery of which was hidden for ages and generations from angels and men, but is now revealed to His holy people (His saints), to whom God was pleased to make known how great for the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ within and among you, the Hope of [realizing the] glory. Him we preach and proclaim, warning and admonishing everyone and instructing everyone in all wisdom (comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God), that we might present every person mature full grown, fully initiated, complete, and perfect) in Christ (the Anointed One) "*** (Col. 1:25-28, Amplified). As we said, until God decided to disclose them, men walked right over these revolutionary "caverns" of divine revelation, without ever recognizing them. They were totally oblivious to their presence in holy Writ, though they had been recessed within the books of the Law and the Prophets all along. They never even dreamed they existed! Had they known that these secret places of God were there, containing such beautiful pictures of redemption's story upon their walls, perhaps they would have made a special effort to seek after them. Nevertheless, it was God's grace that revealed them... and His wise discretion that revealed them when He did! Taking into account that the word "repentance" is a broad term, which simply means in Greek, *to change one's mind*, we can see that, in a very real sense, these, too, were "places of repentance"! They were points in which God's people were given opportunity to change the way they were accustomed to thinking, and enter into and explore new and life-changing dimensions in the Word. My, how important these are to us! We would also hasten to add that though it seemed, as time went on, that some of the truths associated with these were accidentally stumbled upon by various individuals, nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that each and every one has come in that is referred to in Scripture as "the fullness of time", or the appointed

time of the Father. Only when He specifically purposed it, and only when the time was ripe could they have ever been discovered as they were. Settle that in your hearts!

It's a fact that God has established particular times for particular truths to be revealed to each of us as individuals; and it is doubtful that, when it comes to the finite details of His personal dealings, any two people are precisely on the same timetable. Since the Lord chose not to reveal everything to us the moment we first came to Him, and since we all need differing things for our own personal development, we can expect Him to unveil the truths necessary for each of us at varying intervals of our spiritual sojourn.. but not necessarily in accordance with anyone else's schedule. Consider your own experience for proof of this. While we all relish those moments of shared confirmation with others in the Body, have there not also been times when the Lord was either exposing for the first time, or re-emphasizing a particular subject to your spirit that was foreign to the interests of those around you? In your desire to connect, perhaps you tried to call to another brother or sister (or even a congregation) from within your "grotto". Your sole intention was to share with them the things you were discovering along it's walls. But since the Lord had not drawn them to the entranceway, or "rolled away the stone", it remained a sealed place to them. In fact, that "blank" look on their faces left you feeling as if you were invisible to them! They could hear the unintelligible echo of your voice; but had no clue as to where you were! If they could see anything at all, it must have seemed like a "crypt" to them... dead letter, devoid of any personal quickening of the Spirit. Therefore, since they had not seen what you had, they just could not have the same measure of appreciation as did you (maybe the Lord had them focused on another area of study at the time). This ought to be perfectly understandable. On the other hand, have there not been times when the situation was just the opposite... when it was you who could not see or enter into a particular truth about which others were enthused, until the Lord chose to quicken it to your heart? I have. At different points of my spiritual walk, the Lord has let me know that regardless of how much my curiosity was peaked about certain subjects, and regardless of how much excitement was generated about them by others, they were absolutely "off limits" to me until He said otherwise. (There have even been times when He has clearly impressed upon me to obtain certain pieces of literature, but would not give me the liberty to read it until a great while later. It was as if the Spirit said, "*There will be a time... but not now*". This can certainly be challenging). However, while I do believe that we should always acknowledge the Lord before we go "spelunking" into things pertaining to spiritual matters (that's "cave exploring", for those of you who are unfamiliar with outdoor adventure jargon); and while I do believe (as I have so emphatically stated) that it is impossible for us to actually enter into a real place of spiritual enlightenment without His permission; I also believe that it would be a tragic mistake on our parts to assume that we cannot pass over one of these secret places, once He has bid us come. Of this we should all be concerned!

Because truth is vital for transformation (Rom. 12:2), it is important that we enter into every place God has set before us, and that we do so in the order which He has ordained. As was previously pointed out, Christ's image is revealed in the grottos. and as we behold the image of His glory therein, we are changed into that same image (II Cor. 3:18). It stands to reason, then, that we seize the opportunity to enter in, as often as the Lord

would direct. You see, not only are the truths found in the grottos designed to mold character in us; they also prepare us for future revelations...and future situations which we will face. II Peter 1:2-4 says, "*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust***". Notice here that everything we need that pertains to life and godliness, yea, even His exceeding great and precious promises, comes via the knowledge of God. And where is that knowledge found, but in the precious grottos of repentance? If we fail to be partakers of His divine nature, therefore, or to handle situations the way that Christ would, it will only be because we have failed to enter into all that He has set before us.

It is my heartfelt conviction that we have arrived at a time unparalleled in history. There are certain grottos the Lord would now reveal to His people (both individually and corporately), which are designed to perfect their understanding in the things of God, and prepare them for the days ahead; but, sad to say, not everyone will move into them at first call. The reasons for this differ from one individual to another. Some folks have waxed content with the beliefs they now hold, and are unwilling to make any changes or alterations to their vision (for fear that it might mean admitting something to which they had previously been opposed). In such cases, pride is oftentimes the deterring factor. Then there are some who would rather remain in the "ghettos" of their own understanding than to enter into one of God's grottos, simply because it would be such a weariness of the flesh to thoroughly search out a matter (EccI. 12:2). As you know, light does not always overtake us the moment we first step into one of these places. Sometimes it is required of us to examine the Scriptures for hours, days, and even weeks on end, before discovery is finally made. We read that "*it is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter*" (Prov.25:2). It is a most honorable thing, therefore, to seek out a thing, until we find what He has intended. Besides, as we are faithful to explore it's depths, the Lord of light always rewards us richly in due season. The light breaks forth as noon day; the revelation becomes clear as crystal; and we are then able to apply the truth to our lives for the glory of God. The problem with some, though, is that they are just too lazy to make a diligent search! They give up even before they get started... and by doing so, they miss out on the blessing God has reserved for them!

We've all heard the statement, "If something you've read or heard preached doesn't make sense to you now, put it on a shelf 'til later". This can certainly be good advice, when it's correctly applied. But some of us have been so quick to "put things on the shelf", we have placed them completely out of our reach, and beyond the realm of God's present dealings! Needless to say, this can bear tragic consequences!

I'm reminded of the Israelites... and the wonderful opportunity they had of entering into "the promised land". Because they would not hearken to the voice of the Spirit, and enter when God had first bid them, they missed the occasion, and the day of their visitation. By

the time that this mistake was realized, it was too late to do anything about it. They were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty long years, until the opportunity came around again (you can believe that during that time, they sought it carefully with tears, too)! In like manner, I believe that it is imperative that we recognize these God-ordained ""grottos" the moment God reveals them--- else we may very well be left to our own devices (thoughts). If we ignore them, or put them off 'til another day, it may be years before we have the opportunity to enter into them again! *"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven"* (Heb. 12:25).

We know God has willed that ultimately, all shall come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4), and that the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). There will be a general proclamation made to all creation, and then it will become common knowledge to all mankind (Heb. 8:10-11). We have these promises in writing. So, unless the Lord has greatly deceived us, we can expect this to become a reality in the coming age. However, I must say that we do stand in jeopardy of delaying the workings of truth in our lives now, and of disqualifying ourselves from being included in the firstfruits company. We would be most foolish to assume that our placement is guaranteed, or that our promotion is a sure thing. This is why we are admonished to *"give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for IF ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (II Peter 1:10-11). There is something we must do to secure our seating; and a great part of that is to be established in present truth (verse 12). Otherwise, we may be forced to wait until the general admission, where we would be recipients, rather than administrators (much to our regret). Remember, it is more blessed to give than to receive! Let us always keep this in mind!

There are unsearchable riches awaiting us in the grottos---exquisite pictures of the plan of redemption, never before seen by the eyes of our understanding, yet vital to our progression in spiritual maturity. It behooves us, therefore, to hasten our steps, and to continue to ascend from glory to glory up the hill of the Lord, lest we find ourselves as Esau, who *"when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears".* This is definitely something to think about! If we miss Out, it will be nobody's fault but our own!

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