

KINGDOM SPIRIT

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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 907

PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES

The letter to the Ephesians, also written by Paul from Rome, takes on a different tone from the Corinthian and Galatian letters. This letter probably wasn't written specifically to a particular church, but rather was probably a generic letter written to be shared by several congregations throughout Asia Minor. No one seems quite sure why we have the title of the letter being written to the Ephesians. Paul simply encourages and teaches the richness of Christian living. Paul first glories in the plan of God that includes redemption, predestination unto adoption of children by Christ unto Himself, the mystery of His purpose including the inheritance by those in His will, the power of God to those who believe through the resurrected Christ and the setting Jesus over all things to the church, or ecclesia, His body.

We will see more, as we study the book of Romans, that these doctrines of redemption, adoption and inheritance are directed only to Israel as they are part of the promises to Abraham that lead to the Kingdom of God. In virtually all of our study to this point, we have dealt almost exclusively with this Kingdom. I believe it very important that we understand and maintain this kingdom concept through the whole Bible if we are to understand it to its fullest. If we continue in this conceptual thinking, I believe we'll see that Paul and the rest of the New Testament writers did exactly this. While it is not unusual to see people

take verses such as Eph. 2:8-9 by themselves and develop new doctrines, particularly in this case, the doctrine of personal salvation; however, let us look at it with the kingdom concept in mind. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”** We need to recall the first two chapters of Hosea in which the fall or divorce of Israel is summarized. In the latter part of Hosea 1:10, we find, **“it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them (Israel), Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”** Finally, in Hosea 2:19-20, referring to Israel in her restoration, God says, **“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD.”**

Paul is explaining to the Ephesians how this restoration, this being called the **“sons of the living God,”** has been brought about through Jesus Christ. (Read Eph. 2:11-13) They are “saved” from being cast out, from being disinherited from the Abrahamic promises, as he says in Eph. 2:19, **“Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”** However, this salvation was not because of something they did, nor because of something they can do (works), but rather it is a free “gift” by Jesus Christ. It is an accomplished fact, but for it to be of value to them, they have to believe that it is an accomplished fact, part of God's eternal purpose.

It is important to remember that Israel was cast off and divorced because of disobedience and for worshipping gods made with their own hands. Therefore, Paul teaches obedience to the Ephesians by following the example of Christ.

He beseeches them to walk worthy of their calling of God in whatever vocation they are called and gives some specifics. He deals with marriage relationships, children-parent relationships, and master-servant relationships, encouraging them to deal with each other as Christ has dealt with them.

Eph. 6:13-18 presents the armor of God and how we are to use this armor in our daily Christian living.

Paul's letter to the saints at Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia (now Greece), is more one of further encouragement than anything else. He feels they may have to suffer for the cause of Christ, but he encourages them to meet their suffering with a faith in Christ, to help each other, and to be of one mind in Christ.

In encouraging them, Paul tells them that if a man could gain anything by the law, he himself certainly could and gives his reasons in Philippians 3:4-6 but then says in verse 7, **“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”**

He asks them all to let their moderation be known to all men, to not fret, but to be continually in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. If they do so, he promises the peace of God will keep their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. The Philippians have been especially supportive of Paul and his ministry and he expresses his special appreciation.

The letter to the church at Colosse was somewhat different in that Paul had never been there. He had heard of their faith and gives thanks for it. He expresses his continuous concern that no one mislead them. He encourages them to remain steadfast in their faith as they have been taught. In Col. 2:14 Paul tells of Jesus **“blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us; which was contrary to us,**

and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;” He then goes on to explain that these ordinances, referred to in other places as “traditions of the elders” (Matt. 15:2-6, Mark 7:3-9), were ones devised by men, not God's law, and he tells them they do not have to respond to them because they were crafted by men. He then gives them some guidelines for daily Christian living. He includes duties of husbands and wives, children, masters and servants.

The letters to the church at Thessalonica were written from Athens. Paul expresses his special care and love for them as well as his desire to see them again. He had tried to go to them, but had been prevented by Satan, he says, so he sent Timothy to them and now that Timothy had returned with good tidings of their faith and charity, it was a great comfort to Paul.

Probably the main point of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is found in the fourth and fifth chapters, where doctrine dealing with the state of the dead, in relation to Christ's return, is dealt with. Starting with verse 13 of chapt. 4, he tells them that though those who had died prior to the return of Christ are sleeping, those who remain and will be living at the time of Christ's return will have no advantage over them. Those who slept would rise first when the Lord descends, then those who are alive at the time of His coming will be caught up together with those who had risen first to meet Jesus in the clouds and thus would we all ever be with the Lord. He tells them they have no need that he write concerning the times and the seasons for they already know the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. Being not of the night, but rather children of light, they should watch and be sober that the day of the Lord not overtake them as a thief.

Beginning with chapter 5, verse 13, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to Christian living.

The second letter to the Thessalonians was apparently prompted by their not fully understanding the “day of the Lord” or the return of Christ. Paul asks them not to be troubled by anything, including his own letters to them, concerning that the day of Christ is at hand. He says that the day shall not come until after there has been a falling

away and the son of perdition, or man of sin, be revealed. He reminds them that he told them of these things when he was with them.

Because not all receive the love of the truth, God will send them a strong delusion that they will believe a lie. He exhorts them to stand fast and hold to what they have been taught by Paul personally or by his letters.

After asking for their prayers, he commands them to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the traditions Paul has taught them. They are not to count this person as an enemy but are to admonish him as a brother.

To understand more fully Paul's letter to the Romans, it is important to understand the identity of the specific people to whom Paul wrote. His letter to the Romans was written five years before he went to Rome the first time. He knew some of the people personally and most, even though he was related to some of them, by reputation. Unlike most of the rest of Paul's letters, Paul here calls many of the people he was writing to by name. They are listed at the end of the letter. He doesn't deal with particular needs or problems they had, but deals very deeply with the philosophy and history of Christianity which makes this letter more difficult to understand.

The historical evidence to support the following statement is a large study in itself so unfortunately we cannot cover it in this lesson. But the evidence is available, so let me say that the people named by Paul in the 16th chapter probably represent the backbone of the Roman church at that time and to a large extent are members of the royal Silurian family of Britain. As such they had been, as Paul tells us in Rom. 16:7, Christians longer than Paul, and were among the best educated people in the world.

Though Rome was never able to conquer Britain completely, the leader of Britain's army, and thus the leader of the nation, was betrayed and captured and he and his family were taken to Rome for trial. At his trial, because of the huge respect the Romans had for his military genius, he was sentenced to stay in Rome for seven years and never to take up arms against Rome again. It

was during this seven year period that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans and later went to Rome. The names in chapter 16 definitely include part of this family. Some we recognize if we have studied history. It is suspected that some of the names are Roman names for other members of this family, possibly even the leader himself. At this point in history, these Britains had the best educational facilities in the world and were among the world's best educated.

We want to deal in more detail with the book of Romans, so we will deal with it in its entirety next issue. JRL

RECONCILIATION

RESTORATION

We attempted, in our last issue, to establish the fact that the principle of God's judgment is restoration and that God tells us there will be a time in which all things will be restored. Theoretically, should all damage that has ever been done be restored, we would be back in the paradise that existed before Adam sinned. I am not going to pretend that I know how God will bring this all about, but I am convinced that this is the plan that He has had from creation. Only if this were so, could God declare all of His creation good.

While this, I believe, is the plan, that because God does not change, He will carry out, it is not quite as simple as restoring double what someone has stolen. The heart and mind of man will have to be restored to that of Adam before he became disobedient to God. Paul tells us in Romans 8:7-8, "**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.**" Remember that we read in Isa. 45:7 that God created evil. This does not mean that God is evil, only that He created it. To understand this, we need to define sin.

I John 3:4 tells us “**sin is the transgression of the law.**” The word sin is from the Greek *hamartia* and means sin, error, or missing the mark. God neither transgressed His law nor did He make an error, so we cannot accuse Him of sin for creating evil. However, when we as man embrace evil and transgress God’s law or make an error that causes damage to someone, we sin. Paul tells us in Romans 5:12 (when interpreted correctly) that because we die a mortal death, we sin, i.e. because we know we are going to die, we do things we think will help us, but at the same time we damage someone else. Our carnal mind just works that way.

So, if our carnal mind is at enmity with God, how is our mind restored to that of Adam before he sinned. There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are translated to the same English word. The meaning of the two words are close to the same but enough different to make a substantial difference in the way we understand the scriptures. The two words are *apokatallaso* and *katallaso* both of which are translated in the KJV as “reconcile.” A more correct translation of *katallaso* is “conciliate” with “reconcile” being the more correct translation of *apokatallaso*. My College Dictionary has the number one definition of “conciliate” as “to overcome the distrust or hostility of; placate; win over.” It is a one person, or one party effort. Following is a quote from II Corinthians 5:18-20 with the word *katallaso* as “conciliate” or some form of it.

“18 And all things are of God, who hath conciliated us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of conciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, conciliating the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of conciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye conciliated to God.”

Through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His resurrection, God has made the effort to overcome the hostility, or enmity, of man toward Him, to win man over. This conciliation

is not just to a few, but to the whole world. The problem has always been that man is hurting God by disobedience, i.e. not living the way that God provided when He created man, that is to man’s benefit. Through Christ’s sacrifice, God is trying to conciliate man by not reckoning (imputing) these sins to man. Because it is His intent to conciliate the whole world unto Himself, I believe we can be assured that He will not stop His conciliation until this is accomplished.

I think we can see this where the word *apokatallaso* is used and translated “reconcile.” Again referring to my College Dictionary, the number one definition of “reconcile” is, “to cause to cease hostility or opposition.” Both parties to the dispute have to agree and cease hostility or opposition. Paul uses *apokatallaso* in Colossians 1:20-21 in speaking to Christians who were conciliated and had accepted that conciliation.

20 And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.

It is God’s purpose to “reconcile” all things unto Himself, i.e. that all enmity toward Him to cease. Both parties, God and man, are to make peace with each other, both parties will have conciliated with each other. When Paul says it is the purpose of God to reconcile all things whether they are in earth or heaven, he isn’t leaving anything or anybody out. He says all things. When this reconciliation is complete, or perfect, then the restoration of all things will be complete or perfect.

Paul is consistent in his epistles with word “all.” Romans 5:18 says, **Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.**” Paul had already explained in verse 12 that by Adam’s sin, death entered into the world and that death then passed to all men, i.e. “**judgment came upon all men.**” I have never heard of anyone escaping this judgment, so I

have to conclude that all men have been mortals, i.e. they have or will die. With that conclusion, I then also have to conclude that ultimately all men will have justification of life.

Verse 19 verifies this again. **“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”** We don’t know the number of “many” but since all men were made sinners, and it is the same “many” that shall be made righteous, we can conclude that all men will be made righteous.

I realize that this may offend some people. I believe that if we are honest with ourselves, the only reason that we hold to the idea of an eternal burning hell, is that we all have someone that we want to send there. This is certainly not Christian, but as I said, if we are honest with ourselves, I think we would all have to admit this. But this is not the plan or purpose of God, nor, if we study God’s Word diligently, will we find such teaching in His Word. His purpose is the restitution of all things. So how does His plan to do this? Though the plan is simple, it is difficult to explain in detail and provide all of the confirmation scriptures in the confines of an article such as this. But, I believe it necessary to at least give a summary of that plan.

Revelation 20 clearly tells us that there will be at least 2 resurrections. Verses 4-6 tell us, **“4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.**

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Briefly let me say that this first resurrection is of the overcomers, a subject that needs considerable study, but is not the primary object of our study here. We are concerned with the non-overcomer and the non-Christian primarily. Jesus tells us in John 5:28-29, **“Marvel not at this for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”** This is clearly not the first resurrection that we just read about in Rev. 20 since there are both those that have done good and that have done evil in this resurrection. The word “damnation” is from the Greek *krisis* which is normally translated “judgment.” Turn back again to Rev. 20 which speaks of this judgment. Starting in verse 12, **“12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.**

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Understanding God’s principle of judgment that we have discussed, i.e. restitution, is key to understanding this judgment. That there will be Christians here who have not attained to overcomer status is evident in the fact that the book of life was opened as well. As we have already pointed out, the lake of fire is symbolic of God’s judgment, i.e. the restitution of all things. Once that restitution is made, it would be impossible in my mind for a person not to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as one’s own and thus conciliate to God, thus reconciliation with God, thus not only restitution of damage done to man but to God as well. Then, as God saw it from the beginning, all of His creation is good. JRL

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

(Read John 3:1-13) Nicodemus, as a ruler of the Jews, meant that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, or the Jewish Senate. Rabbinical tradition has it that Nicodemus was the third richest man in Jerusalem. As a member of the Sanhedrin, he was a teacher of scripture. I think we can understand that the status of these positions caused him to go to Jesus in secret by night. But he understood that the miracles that he was seeing Jesus do could not be done except by the power of God. The statement that Jesus made to him (verse 3) took him completely by surprise and he obviously did not understand it. **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** “Born” is from the Greek word “gennao.” It is translated into several English words in the New Testament, but it is primarily translated “born” (39 times) and “beget” (or begat) (49 times). According to Strong’s Concordance, it means to *procreate*, (properly of the father, but by extension of the mother); figuratively to *regenerate*. The word “again” here means “from above,” or “by Divine Power.” To me this doesn’t mean just to change, but rather to create a new person. While we can be assured of this new creation now, I believe what Jesus is referring to is the actual creation of the new person in the resurrection, not a changed person in this life time. The assurance should change our life, but the actual new creation is not a reference to that change, but rather when a person is changed as Jesus was changed in His resurrection.

The word “see” is from the Greek word “eidon.” There are a number of words translated “see”, “look”, “behold”, etc., in the New Testament, each with a little different meaning. According to Appendix 133 of the Companion Bible, **“eidon = to see: implying not the mere act of looking, but the actual perception of the object.”** Verse 5 actually tells us what is meant by “see” with the statement, **“he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”**

Nicodemus misunderstands and uses the word “born” (gennao) of the mother, but Jesus

uses it of the Father, as meaning begetting. The phrase **“water and of the spirit”** in verse 5 is a figure of speech known as a Hendiadys, meaning “two for one.” A note in the Companion Bible says that there is no article in the original but rather just **“water and spirit”** and then goes on to say, “Not two things, but one, by which the latter Noun becomes a superlative and emphatic Adjective, determining the meaning and nature of the former Noun, showing that one to be spiritual water: i.e. not water but spirit.” He then makes it clear that there is a difference between the physical birth that we have all experienced, being born of the flesh, and being born of the Spirit. Vs. 7 in the New American Standard Bible says, **“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”** In verse 8, the word “wind” is translated from the Greek word “pneuma” which is normally translated breath or spirit. This is the only place that “pneuma” is translated wind. The word normally translated wind is “anemos” and is always translated wind. The word “listeth” could also be translated as “pleaseth, desireth, or willeth.” Thus, if we translated “pneuma” as normally translated as “Spirit”, we could read this verse as **“The Spirit bloweth (breatheth) where He willeth, and thou hearest the sound (His voice) thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”**

This has really confused Nicodemus and he wants to know how all this can be. Jesus is rather rough in His answer. If Nicodemus has the position of authority and is supposed by that authority to be a teacher, Jesus asks how come he does not know these things. Jesus then answers His own question by basically telling Nicodemus that it is because he does not believe what Jesus has been teaching.

As we have said before, there is no punctuation in the original Greek to indicate where paragraphs begin and end. My red letter King James Bible indicates Jesus continues to talk to Nicodemus through verse 21. My Ferrar Fenton Bible indicates that John is the one commenting from verse 16 through 21. The New American Standard Bible starts a new paragraph at verse 16,

but with Jesus making the comments. Other translations start a new paragraph at verse 14 with John commenting. The Companion Bible makes the break at verse 13 with John making the comments through verse 21. Dr. Bullinger's gives several reasons for this such as, from this point the past tenses indicate completed events; the expression "only Begotten Son" is not used by Jesus of Himself, but only by John; also the phrase "in the name of" is also not used by Jesus but rather by John; Jesus had already ascended to heaven when John wrote this Gospel, etc.

"Hath ascended" in verse 13 = hath gone up (of himself). Contrast this with **"for God took him"** (Gen. 5:24) speaking of Enoch, and **"Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."** (II Kings 2:11) John is indicating that Jesus had already ascended to heaven by the time John wrote this, but no one else had done so. Remember that John wrote this some time after Christ ascended to heaven. The phrase, **"Which is in heaven"** is not in the earlier manuscripts but appears to have been added later.

The word "perish" in verse 15 is from the Greek "apollumi" which according to Young's Analytical Concordance means "to loose, loose away, destroy." The word "eternal" is from the Greek "aionios" meaning "age lasting." If we understand that there are two resurrections as Rev. 20 tells us, these words take on a different meaning than is usually taught. This is not to say that anyone who receives "eternal" life won't have immortal life, as this is a given, but I believe this tells us that anyone who does not believe in Jesus will not have part in the first resurrection and the age that follows from that first resurrection until the second resurrection and the Great White Throne of Judgment. They will be loosed away from that possibility or that possibility will be destroyed for them. The same applies to verse 16 with the word "everlasting" being translated from the same word as "eternal."

The term **"only begotten Son"** is interesting here in verse 16. "Only begotten" is from the Greek word, "monogenes" and means only born, i.e. sole. "Monogenes" comes from two Greek words, *monos* meaning "remaining, i.e. sole or

single"; and *ginomai* meaning "to cause to be ('gen' erate), i.e. (reflexively) to become (come into being)". However, it sometimes pays to go back into the Hebrew to help understand the full meaning of the word. (Read Psa. 22:20) **"My darling"** here is from the Hebrew word "yachiyd." When the translators of the Septuagint Bible looked for a Greek word that meant the same as "yachiyd", they used the Greek word "monogenes." "Yachiyd," according to Dr. Strong, is defined as "prop. *United*, i.e. *sole*; by implication *beloved*, also *lonely*; (fem.) the *life* (as not to be replaced.)" So taking this in mind, the term "only begotten" not only indicates God's only Son that He caused to come into being, but a unity between Father and Son is indicated, i.e. the two are one.

Other places where the word "begotten" is used without the accompanying "only", it comes from the same word that "born" is taken from, i.e. "gennao" such as Acts 13:33, I Cor. 4:15 and Heb. 1:5 for example.

The word "world" in verse 17 is from the Greek word "kosmos" which refers to the physical world. The word "condemn" is from the Greek word "krino" which means to judge, or to pass judgment.

So the way I read these two verses is that God loves (agapao) the whole world to the degree that it is His intent to save the whole world, however, for those that believe in Jesus Christ, they will receive the added benefit of being resurrected and living throughout the next age which Rev. 20 tells us will last 1000 years. Those not believing Jesus Christ will be loosed away, or "destroyed" for that time period. There is much more to this, but simply put for the moment, this is how I read these two verses.

Going on to verse 18, a believer will escape being judged, however, the unbeliever, because he does not believe in Jesus Christ, is still in his sin, thus is already convicted. This is because those who do evil refuse to come to the light, i.e. Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sent into the world, because they are afraid of their evil deeds being discovered. Those who are willing to do what is right comes to the light that their

deeds may be manifest because they know that what is right comes from God.

(Read John 3:22-24) For a time, it appears that Jesus and John the Baptist were doing the same thing only in different locations. (Read John 3:25-36) Apparently, the fact that Jesus and John the Baptist were both doing basically the same thing was regarded as a competition by at least some of John's disciples and some of the Jews. Actually the original manuscripts read "a Jew." So they came to John the Baptist and asked him about it, telling him that there seemed to be more people going to hear Jesus and to be baptized than there was coming to John. John's answer is that this could only happen if it was according to God's plan. He reiterates that he is not the Christ, but was sent before Him. (Re-read vs. 29) In effect John is saying that Jesus has the true gospel, i.e. the bride, and that he, John, is but a friend of the bridegroom, but he joys in seeing what is happening. John understands his role and is satisfied with it telling his disciples that Jesus will increase in all that he does, but John's role will now decrease. What John saw and heard was limited, but because Jesus came from above, what He saw and heard, i.e. from the Holy Spirit, was unlimited, without measure.

The word "everlasting" in verse 36 is again "aionios", thus age-lasting, i.e. life for the age. Again, I believe this refers to those who have part in the first resurrection and have the added benefit of living during the 1000 year age as described in Rev. 20. Then we are told that he who believes not the Son, "**shall not see life.**" I believe the "life" referred to here is the same age-lasting life we discussed above. The non-believer simply shall not (note the future tense) see that

life. The word "see" here means "to truly comprehend." So he shall not truly comprehend that age-lasting life. We'll see a little further in our study that all men will be resurrected but not all at the same time. Keep in mind that this is all part of God's plan for mankind and the ultimate end will be good for man. The unbeliever, that shall not see that life, has the wrath of God abiding on him (presence tense). The word "wrath" indicates a violent passion or a justified abhorrence. As I thought about this, the term "tough love" that we hear quite often anymore came to mind. As I look at the whole picture, I view God's wrath, not as violent, destructive wrath, but rather "tough love" to discipline and teach. JRL

God grants liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it.
Daniel Webster

The armor of God is awkward apparel for armchairs.

Many who are well prepared for a rainy day are totally unprepared for eternity.

Better to be known as a do-gooder than a do-nothing.

There is a world of difference between knowing the Word of God and knowing the God of the Word.

Leonard Ravenhill

The wealth of experience is one possession that has not yet been taxed.

A man's character is like a fence—it cannot be strengthened by whitewash.
