

Episode #627 - The Why Question 12: Why Not Now?

I. One of the most difficult questions we must ask ourselves regarding God, life, and the world is the “why” question. We who believe that there is a God Who is all-good and all-loving and Who made the world must answer why then this world is such a terrible place and in such a mess.

II. If Christ’s death on the cross, burial, and resurrection were all that was necessary for God to redeem the earth from the mess it is in and make it the way He always intended it to be, then why, now that Christ has done this, does God still delay in bringing in His kingdom? If Christ’s death was all that was necessary to fix everything, then why didn’t He do so long ago?

A. In the book of Acts, we see God moving His kingdom forward, and it looks like it will quickly take over the earth. Yet something seemed to change, and now we do not see God powerfully working to bring in His kingdom.

B. God is not doing much to stop evil and ensure the victory of good. Sir Robert Anderson in *The Silence of God* said, “The Divine history of the favored race for thousands of years teems with miracles by which God gave proof of His power with men, and yet we are confronted by the astounding fact that from the days of the apostles to the present hour the history of Christendom will be searched in vain for the record of a single public event to compel belief that there is a God at all.”

C. Why does God not openly demonstrate Himself today?

III. God had a different plan: the Dispensation of Grace. This plan started after the close of the Acts period at Acts 28:28, and is the work God is doing today.

IV. If the book of Ephesians is the book of God’s present purpose, then chapter 3 is the chapter of God’s present purpose. We learn here what it is that God is doing today. Why does God act so secretly and silently today? Why does He not make Himself known? These questions are answered by the third chapter of Ephesians.

V. Ephesians 3:1-2.

A. Verse 1. The word is not “cause,” but Greek *charis*, which means “grace.” Paul calls himself a “bound one of Christ Jesus.” He was not talking about being a prisoner of Rome, but of Christ. It was not Paul’s idea to set forth the truths in this chapter. It was not his choice to interrupt the kingdom program to start this new plan. This was all God’s doing. Now Paul starts a long parenthesis that deals with the truth for today.

B. Verse 2. Paul assumes they have heard of this new administration of God from their own local apostles and prophets (verse 5.) This is God’s administration of grace.

A. Dispensation = Greek “*oikonomia*” = house-law. Has to do with an administration, or the working out of one, a policy.

1. Not just with His house-Romans 16:23.

2. Not just God acting graciously-He has always done that!

B. God’s policy towards the earth today is to be gracious.

1. In the past, God worked sometimes in judgment and sometimes in grace.

2. God’s kingdom is to be total government.

3. God’s dispensation now is totally grace! If God is working totally in grace, that means that righteousness is not rewarded just as much as it means wickedness is not punished. This world brings us good things and suffering. God adds His grace to the good we receive, but does not take away the suffering and evil. Every day and in every situation,

God's goal is to administer His grace, and every day and in every situation, He does this.

4. The revelation of this new administration of God was given to Paul to pass on to us. It was not given to Paul as if he was going to be the administrator, for that would mean God's grace stopped being administered when Paul died!

VI. God's dispensation of grace results in something far different than His kingdom.

- A. God knows that grace does not defeat the wicked. Isaiah 26:10.
- B. God's judgments will cause the victory of righteousness. Isaiah 26:9.
- C. In the dispensation of grace, God deals graciously with us. Ephesians 4:32.
- D. Grace appeared to all mankind when this dispensation began. Titus 2:11-13.
- E. The current record of God's grace will teach all ages to come! Ephesians 2:7.

VII. Conclusion: The fifth and final part of our answer: the dispensation of grace explains God's long delay in saving us after the death and resurrection of Christ. He is demonstrating how gracious He is for all time to come. This is a very important work! We can praise God He is doing this.