

Episode #629 The Why Question 14: God's Gracious Work

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?

III. In previous studies, we revealed that God's plan changed at some point in New Testament after His work on the cross. We found that change when, instead of men being apostles, the gospel itself became the apostle at Acts 28:28.

IV. In Ephesians 3:1-2 we found God's work today defined: God is working with the world totally in a dispensation (management or administration) of grace and grace alone.

V. We have seen in the book of Philippians that the introduction of the Dispensation of Grace delayed the kingdom.

A. Philippians 2:1-2. Paul urges them to be consoled in Christ and to have the same mindset he did.

B. Philippians 2:5-8. Paul urges them to have the same mindset Christ did when He let go of equality with God to become a slave and die on a cross! What were they giving up? Their hope of an immediate fulfillment of the kingdom!

C. Philippians 2:25-30. An illustration of what they had given up. Epaphroditus almost died, and all Paul could do is hope for God's mercy on him. This was Paul, the man who at one point had been able to send handkerchiefs to people and they could touch them and be healed, Acts 19:11-12. Yet at Epaphroditus' sickbed he could only pray and wring his hands! The powerful Acts period had ended and Paul himself was in the same boat with all of us.

1. I Timothy 5:23. Paul offers Timothy medical advice, not healing.

2. II Timothy 4:20. Paul left Trophimus behind him sick. The testimony of the post-Acts letters of Paul is unanimous: Paul could no longer heal. The work of God had changed!

D. Philippians 3:2-3. Paul calls the circumcision "mutilation." Yet in Acts 16:3 he had actually circumcised Timothy himself! The law had still been important in the Acts period, but now it is important NOT to keep the law, just the reality it symbolized.

E. The testimony of the book of Philippians is clear: the kingdom of God was delayed after Acts 28:28. But the question is why?

VI. The revelation of grace.

A. Ephesians 2:7. God's kingdom is all about fairness and government. Yet God desires that in the midst of His righteous order no one loses sight of His marvelous grace. God therefore shows grace to us so that in the ages (or eons) to come He will always have the record of His grace today to show how exceedingly rich His grace is.

B. Ephesians 3:8-10. God's wisdom in grace is now being revealed to heavenly principalities and powers. God is using His work with us to teach heavenly beings.

C. Ephesians 4:32. Dealing graciously as God deals graciously with us. The answer to what God is doing today? In each and every situation it is "God is being gracious." If God cannot be gracious then God will not act at all.

VII. Conclusion: The kingdom of God which will right all the wrongs of this world was delayed for God to do something very important: write into the record of His long dealings with Adam's race a complete record of the grace that is inherent in His character. If we ask why God waits so long to save us and why He allows so much calamity in the world, one important answer is that He has tied himself down today to acting only and exclusively in grace.