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## -STUDIES IN EPHESIANS- #28

"That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." 2:7. In the last study we spoke of the rich mercy. Mercy and grace are closely related as we stated. But grace can still be in operation when there is no longer ground for mercy. That is what this verse is showing to us.

Of course we would like to know what is meant by the expression "ages to come." We have seen all kinds of charts in which each author that he had the dispensations and eons all set forth. But the charts all seem to differ. Nearly all of them leave out one period of time spoken of in the Word. This is to be found in Rev. 20:10 "day and night for ever and ever." A literal translation would render it "to the ages of the ages," whatever that might mean. Surely there is no indication anywhere as to just how long it will be. It is a period after the Millennium and preceding the new heavens and the new earth. For convenience we might call it the Post-Millennial Kingdom. Since the Revelation is concerning earth conditions, we do not know what is going on in the heavens during that time. But it might refer (?) to the period of time mentioned here in Eph. 2:7 described as "the ages to come."

But that does not matter too much. It is the fact that there are exceeding riches of His grace, that we now know nothing about, are going to be revealed in that time. The revelation will be in His kindness towards us. How that there could be more kindness than we know at present is a puzzle, but here it is. We can only believe and wonder.

There is in this verse another emphasis that is never missing in this epistle. It is that this kindness is thru Christ Jesus. All that we are or have is and will be in and thru Him. We must never forget to give Him His proper place and due.

We are baffled by many expressions to be found in this epistle. They are so far beyond our poor ability to comprehend. Also there are hidden reason that we cannot fathom. Why that God should love us, have mercy on us, show His grace toward us, and similar questions just are never fully answered. But some day we shall know. It is ours now to trust, preparing as much as possible to be good workmen that need not be ashamed, awaiting the day of manifestation. Surely such contemplation should have some influence for good on the walk in which we now engage. Grace...kindness!!

## -OUR CITIZENSHIP-

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3:20 A.V.

For our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Darby.

For our citizenship is in the heavens, whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Numeric N T.

We might add more attempts at the translation of this difficult passage, but the notes in the Companion Bible are very helpful in arriving at the meaning. It has been our habit in past years to link this passage with the so-called rapture in 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4. But such is not the case. There is no connection. The Corinthians and the Thessalonians had only an earthly hope, the kingdom of the heavens. They awaited the coming of the King. The place of this waiting is the earth. He is to come from the heavens to set up His kingdom on the earth.

But in Phil. 3:20 the heavenly citizens do not stand on the earth waiting for a King. They stand in the heavens waiting for the Savior. There is where He is to APPEAR, to the heavens, with them and to them.

FROM WHENCE is better FROM WHICH. Which is singular and refers to citizenship, not heavens. Heavens is in the plural and is so translated by many.

Conversation or citizenship is POLITEUMA in the Greek. It is the seat of government of which we are citizens. This also includes rights and responsibilities. As a verb it is used in Phil. 1:27 "only let your conversation (citizenship) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

This citizenship belongs right now to every one who believes and is a member. It is not something in the dim future. That is the reason for the walk now. It is to be in conformity with the citizenship.

Now do not ask me how I am going to get there to look for His appearing. I do not know! God has not seen fit to reveal it. It is another one of those things that the members of the dispensation of the mystery have to take by faith. We have to take by faith our being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. We do not know what they may be. They are not described. So it is with many things connected with the high calling. It is not an earthly sphere. Material things are not in it.

So we do not look for His coming in the clouds. His APPEARING will be far above all clouds, yes far above the stars. So let us wait in faith, nothing doubting.

**-FIVE DEGREES OF SAINTHOOD- #5**

"And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"(Eph. 2:6). Here is an expression that refers to both the present and the future. We are to reckon it so now for it is to be a blessed reality then. As Abraham was a stranger and a pilgrim all his life, yet he had a land that was promised to him. He will live in that land some day. So we live as strangers and pilgrims in this world looking for that blessed hope.

But the big question to many is WHERE? Where does Christ sit? Let us go back a little, way back to Job 26:7 "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place." At one time this was laughed at, but now we learn in astronomy that there is such a place. We read further in Psa. 48:2 "Mount Zion, on the sides of the north." Again in Psa. 75:6 "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south." This leaves us with the conclusion that promotion does come then from the north.

Lucifer, the most beautiful and wise of all creatures once said in his heart "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most high." But Lucifer (Satan) could not do it. Only Christ has ever ascended to that high and lofty place. It is so far away that it is said to be "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come"(Eph. 1:21).

How did He get there? He ascended. "He ascended up far ABOVE all heavens." Eph. 4:10. "He passed thru the heavens." Heb. 4:14 R.V. Christ is in a place which no creature has ever entered. The greatest of all creatures, the most powerful, and the wisest failed in an attempt to get there. But there is where Christ is, and where we by the grace of God are reckoned to sit and where we by the same grace will some day actually sit. Do you wonder that Satan does everything possible against such doctrine? In his rage and chagrin he would make us believe that Christ is a creature just like himself and that Christ dwells in the heavens among heavenly beings like himself.

Those who inherit the earth in the resurrection will be blest with earthly blessings. Those who inherit a place in the far above all will enjoy all spiritual blessings there (Eph 1:3). When the time comes that all the heavens are cleansed, Christ will be manifested and we with Him (Col. 3:4).

**-WORKING OUT SALVATION-**

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Phil. 2:12, 13.

Here is a statement that must not be divided nor taken out of its context. Too often only part of it is quoted and misapplied.

Those who boast in works have taken the first part of this saying and made it to say "work for your salvation." But it does not say or mean that.

Others will make it to mean that one has to be working all the time in order to keep his salvation. It does not mean that either.

We would observe that this salvation must be worked in before it can be worked out. It is "work out your salvation." So then it is possessed before it can be worked out. No amount of works can procure this salvation for it was paid for on Calvary by the precious blood of Christ and must be received as a gift. Neither can it be possible for one to work to keep his salvation. Our life is hid with Christ in God. He is the one who keeps it, not we.

But when we are saved, when we become a new creation, we are created unto good works which were before ordained that we should walk in them. This is what we are talking about. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed is one that seeks to know what the good works are that he is to do and then does them. That is working out his salvation. Keeping or getting salvation has nothing to do with it. But there is a reward for the good workman. If good work is done and a reward is received, then there is no need for shame.

A good workman is going to be careful in choosing materials as well as foundation. This choosing is a matter of the will. But we see that if we are to will and do of His good pleasure, it must be God working in us. The flesh can never please God, either before or after being saved. Therefore we cannot boast even of the choice, nor either of the work.

No wonder that it must be with fear and trembling! This is not with doubt and uncertainty. There is no room for any distrust. All care is laid upon Him. But fear and trembling show forth a spirit of humility and dependence.

There is a wonderful lesson in this passage for us today. How thankful we should be for the inworked salvation. How ready and willing we should be to work it out for His glory and honor. How sweet to abandon the will of the flesh and do His will!

- TRACKS THRU ACTS - #11

In the beginning of this series it was noted that the main geographical divisions of Acts were, Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome. Along with these geographical divisions we find parallel with them ethnological sections. At Jerusalem the gospel was to Jew only. At Antioch it was to both Jew and Gentile. At Rome to Gentile only.

I. At Jerusalem Peter addresses men of Judah, men of Israel, house of Israel. At the dispersion at the death of Stephen we find that disciples went out from Jerusalem preaching to Jews only. The traditional idea that the church began at Pentecost and that both Jew and Gentile were baptized there into one body does not fit in with the facts. At least 8 years after Pentecost Peter had to have a special vision on the house top before he would enter the house of a Gentile or have anything to do with him. Not only that, but he was called before the council to account for such actions. That, just in itself, speaks plainly that there had been no ministry among Gentiles until the event in the house of Cornelius.

II. But at Antioch there is something new. Paul addresses men, brethren and such as fear God. Peter had opened to the Gentiles the doors of the kingdom at the house of Cornelius. That prepared the way for the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles. We must remember that the ministry among the Gentiles during Acts had one purpose; that some of Israel might be saved. That was why the Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree. It was that Israel might bear fruit. So all thru the section where Paul speaks to both Jew and Gentile, it is to the Jew first. The hope was in no way changed at the beginning of the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles. It was still the hope of Israel. The Gentile is allowed to share in it, to partake of it. He is a child of Abraham by faith and so has a part in the promise to him.

III. But after the conference with the Jewish leaders at Rome, there is a distinct change. No longer is the Jew first. The salvation of God is sent now to the Gentiles. The salvation of God is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. But He is not sent to the Gentiles either as a King or Messiah. That title is not used in connection with the dispensation of the mystery. For the first time He is revealed as the HEAD of a family of God where Jew and Gentile are joint-heirs of a new inheritance which had never been known before. The heavens, not the earth are their future abode. Their blessings are spiritual, not material.

DEAR YOUNG FOLKS; There are some truths in the realm of spiritual things that are very hard for the young to understand, (and maybe for the older folks as well). The Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul said, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He goes on to say that he takes pleasure in infirmities, necessities, persecutions, and distresses. And then he sums it all up by saying, "For when I am weak, then am I strong."

Now can you figure that one! How can a person say that he is strong when he is weak? Did you ever try to make it out?

Did you ever try to tackle something that was entirely too big for you and you did not know it? How did you come out? On the other hand did you ever face a job that you knew was absolutely too much for you. So you enlisted the help of mother or dad and it was done in no time at all!

Now do you see? When you know enough to know that you cannot do it of yourself, you are ready and willing to get help from the place help ought to come and you have the job done in no time and rejoice in the fact that with help you were able to do it.

That is what Paul is talking about. He knew that in himself there could be no good thing done. He knew his weakness. So then with the help of God he can do all things that God wants him to do. So then when he knows he is weak and relies on God, he is strong. But when he does not know his weakness and tries to accomplish something in his own strength, he fails and then really learns his own weakness.

I have been taking this from 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10. You will note that before this he says that if he were to glory or boast of anything he thinks he has done, he is only a fool. Have you ever seen some of these fools? Be sure that you are not one of them. Also while talking of fools, some time just take the concordance and look up all the references to FOOL in Proverbs. It is really enlightening when you read all of them.

But Paul also says that he was compelled to be a fool in that he had to glory before them. Why? Were they so carnal that they could not understand what he was driving at? It must have been so. They were more interested in following leaders than they were the Lord and His Word. We have some like that today. We hardly know whether to pity or to censure them.

Sincerely in HIM, *Dean M. Baker*

- THE EDITOR'S DESK -

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AT LAST! Way back in TFT #71 we promised an article. You will find it on page 1 of this paper, entitled Our Citizenship. A reader reminded us of this.

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PRAYER IS NEEDED: for some invalids, some missionaries, and some who have problems to solve. Also pray for us and the TFT ministry. Thanks a lot for your letters and helpfulness. So glad so many think of us and our responsibility here.

VISITORS. Several have been in lately. U R welcome. Try to warn us tho.

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