

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXII : GOD MAKES ALIVE / RAISES UP DEAD SINNERS BY GRACE (2:4-10)

God Makes Alive / Raises Up Dead Sinners by Grace (2:1-10)

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

Also you — being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which once ye did walk according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all did walk once in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath — as also the others, and God, being rich in kindness, because of His great love with which He loved us, even being dead in the trespasses, did make us to live together with the Christ, (by grace ye are having been saved,) and did raise [us] up together, and did seat [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that He might show, in the ages that are coming, the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, for by grace ye are having been saved, through faith, and this not of you — of God the gift, not of works, that no one may boast; for of Him we are workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk. (Young’s Literal Translation)

Form and Structure

Paul begins a new sentence (vv 1-7) but is broken, the subject and verb is not given until vv 4,5 where the sentence begins again

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

having mentioned sin, Paul digresses into the depravity of man before continuing his original thought

² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

he now continues his original intent by repeating how he began

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

⁶ and raised us up together,

and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul now begins the second sentence (vv 8-10) providing a summary of the nature of the salvation achieved by God

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:1-10 NKJV)

Resuming Paul's Line of Thought . . .

In the lesson prior to our excursus we saw Paul returning to the point he originally wanted to make. In chapter one Paul was emphasizing the power used by God in the raising and setting Christ in authority over all created beings. He had just begun his transition to apply what he had taught to our Christian lives when he digressed to emphasize that the life he was going to talk about was spiritual life since we were spiritually dead. Paul spends two verses emphasizing the depravity of man and our enslavement to sin, then continues in v. 4, *'but God being rich in mercy.'*

We began to look at the mercy of God and the fact that believers are *'made alive together with,' 'raised up together with,'* and *'seated together with'* the risen Christ. This is all possible because of our connection to Christ, a concept so important that we took an excursus to look at what it means to be *'in Christ.'* We now return to Paul's teaching concerning our salvation wrought by the power of God in the lives of believers.

v. 5C — by grace you are saved — *χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι* [*chariti este sesōmenoi*] a parenthetical outburst Paul will repeat in v. 8. "Grace" provides salvation for sinners through the sacrificial death of Christ as well as enables believers to live acceptably before God. "By grace" is a dative of means, instrument or cause, expressing salvation is "through grace" or "on the basis of grace." "The statement is parenthetical here: it anticipates the fuller assertion of v. 8. **But that people who were dead in sin should be granted a share in Christ's resurrection life is such a demonstration of divine grace that it calls for an immediate tribute to that grace.**" [Bruce, 286] "The apostle says, by way of parenthesis, *by grace are ye saved. The gratuitous nature of salvation is one of the most prominent ideas of the context and of the epistle. The state of men was one of helplessness and ill-desert. Their deliverance from that state is due to the power and the unmerited love of God. They neither deserved to be saved, nor could they redeem themselves. This truth is so important and enters so deeply into the very nature of the Gospel, that Paul brings it forward on every fit occasion. And if the mode in which he speaks of our deliverance, does not of itself show it to be gratuitous, he introduces the declaration parenthetically, lest it should be for a moment forgotten.*" [Hodge, Ephesians] *Note grace used 3x in v. 5-8, contrast wrath in v. 3 — they co-exist with no conflict: wrath is man viewed alone as sinners; grace is man viewed in respect to God's work on his behalf. Or considering our recent excursus, we could say that wrath is man viewed as 'in Adam,' grace is man viewed 'in Christ.'*

BELIEVERS ARE IN A "SAVED STATE" — saved = perfect passive participle; it has the basic sense of "deliverance or rescue from danger" and is used as deliverance from dangers at war, sea, disease or the wrath of gods in classical Greek literature. It occurs 291x in the LXX and 106x in the NT. In the NT it is used for both physical (Matt 14:30; Acts 27:2) as well as spiritual deliverance (John 10:9; Rom 10:9; 1 Thess 2:16). The context here demands a spiritual deliverance. "The passive voice is labeled by some grammarians as a divine passive where God clearly is the subject. Sinners are being saved by God's gracious act. The perfect tense expresses a completed action with continuing results in the present time. The completed action occurred at the moment of their salvation.... Although it could be translated 'you have been saved' (ASV, RSV, NASB, TEV, JB, NIV, NJB, NRSV), the translation 'you are saved' (AV, NEB) better conveys the continuing results of being saved. In other words, God, by his grace, initially saves, but by that same grace he keeps believers safe or saved from God's wrath and from sin's grip of death from which they are delivered." [Hoehner, 333] "The idea is that they were saved and continued to be so. The [word for 'grace'] is put emphatically first – 'by grace it is that ye have been saved.' The parenthetical mention of grace is in place. *Nothing else than grace could give life to the dead, but grace could indeed do even that.*" [Salmond, Expositor's GK Testament, 288]

'THE UNENDING STATE OF THE BELIEVER COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUT IN STRONGER LANGUAGE'

— "We have here in the Greek what is called a periphrastic construction. This is used when the writer cannot get all of the details of action from one verbal form. So he uses two, a finite verb and a participle [= 'verbal adjective']. **The participle here is in the perfect tense, which tense speaks of an action that took place in past time and was completed in past time, having results existent in present time. The translation reads, 'By grace have you been completely saved, with the present result that you are in a saved state of being.'** The perfect tense speaks of the existence of finished results in present time. But Paul is not satisfied with showing the existence of finished results in present time. He wants to show the persistence of results through present time. So he uses the verb 'to be' in the present tense which gives durative force to the finished results. Thus, **the full translation is, 'By grace you have been saved in past time completely, with the result that you are in a state of salvation which persists through present time.'** The unending state of the believer in salvation could not have been put in stronger or clear language. The finished results of the past act of salvation

PERIPHRAISIS (or PERIPHRASTIC CONSTRUCTION) — This word is a combination of two Greek words, 'round about' + 'to say'; therefore a periphrastic construction is a 'round about way of saying something.' In Greek, normally verb forms are made by changing the beginning or ending of the root of the verb (which indicates the person, number, tense, voice, and mood). However, another way of forming some verb occurrences is by adding a form of a linking verb (usually the verb 'to be') to a participle to express one verbal idea. We do this in English when we say something like, 'I will be arriving in the morning.' In many cases it is merely using a verb with a participle to express an idea which could have just as easily been expressed by a single verb (thus, the 'round-about way of saying something'). Other times there may be no single verbal form that could express the meaning of a phrase such as 'shall have been bound, shall have been loosed' (Matt 16:19) and therefore the periphrastic construction is required.

With that in mind, understand that when we talk about a *periphrastic tense*, we are not necessarily referring to a distinct verbal idea, but rather to a particular periphrastic means of conveying an idea.

are always present with the reader. His present state of salvation is dependent upon one thing and one thing only, his past appropriation of the Lord Jesus as Saviour. His initial act of faith brought him salvation in its three aspects,

justification, the removal of the guilt and penalty of sin and the impartation of a positive righteousness, Jesus Christ Himself, an act which occurs at the moment of believing, and a position that remains static for time and eternity;

sanctification, positional, the act of the Holy Spirit taking the believing sinner out of the first Adam with his (Adam's) sin and death, and placing him in the Last Adam (Jesus Christ) with His righteousness and life, an act that occurs at the moment of believing; *progressive*, the process by which the Holy Spirit eliminates sin from the experience of the believer and produces His fruit, gradually conforming him into the image of the Lord Jesus, a process that goes on all through the life of a Christian and continues all through eternity, and which never is completed, for a finite creature can never equal an infinite one in any quality;

and *glorification*, the act of the Holy Spirit, transforming the mortal bodies of believers into glorified, perfect bodies at the Rapture of [all believers].

The believer has had his *justification*, he is having his *sanctification*, and he is yet to have his *glorification*. The earnest of the Spirit guarantees to him his glorification.” [Wuest, 66f] Note YLT: **‘by grace ye are having been saved’** “The verb is perfect. More usually the present tense appears, ‘ye are being saved;’ e.g. 1 Cor xv. 2; 2 Cor. ii. 15 (‘them that are being saved; them that are perishing’); the Christian being viewed as under the *process of preservation* which is to terminate in glory.” [Moule, 71] “‘To save’ here is an inclusive term characterizing God’s act of making alive, raising up, and seating with Christ as a deliverance from the plight of the old situation to all the benefits of the new. The perfect tense draws attention to the continuing effects of that rescue act for the present, is in line with the surrounding aorists and the realized eschatology of vv 5, 6, and will be balanced by the future perspective of v 7.... For Paul salvation does have past, present, and future aspects.” [Lincoln, 104f] Note the surrounding aorists to which Lincoln refers: ‘we walked’ (v. 2), ‘we all once conducted ourselves’ (v. 3), ‘made alive together with’ (v. 5), ‘raised up together with,’ ‘made us sit together’ (v. 6), ‘he might show’ (v. 7), ‘created’ (v. 10).

GOD’S SOVEREIGN FREEDOM FROM OBLIGATION — “It is an impassioned underlining of what the confessional statements he is making should mean for his readers. It draws their attention to the divine initiative, the definite accomplishment and the continuing reality involved in having been made alive together with Christ. Their new situation has been brought about by grace.... *The reality and generosity of grace is appreciated all the more after a statement which shows how seriously God takes human sinfulness, deeming it to be deserving of his wrath (v 3). And from the human standpoint, the necessity of an intervention of grace is underlined when set in contrast to the bankruptcy and doom of a humanity left to itself, left to what it is ‘by nature’ (v 3). ‘By grace you have been saved’ draws the readers’ attention to God’s sovereign freedom from obligation to save them.*” [Lincoln, 102ff] “Mercy pities. Grace pardons. But it does more than that. It saves all the way, delivering men from the greatest woe (everlasting damnation), and bestowing upon them the choicest blessing (everlasting life for soul and body). Being saved by grace is the opposite of being saved by merit, the merit that supposedly accrues from inherent goodness or from strenuous effort. Cf. 2:8,9. *The expression clearly indicates that the ground of our salvation lies not in us but in God.*” [Hendriksen, 117]

v. 6b — DELIVERANCE FROM SIN A PRESENT REALITY — in the heavenly realms — ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις [en tois epouranious] “*The transfer of believers from the death of sin and the realm of the devil is expressed more strongly in v. 6 than elsewhere in the NT when it is said that believers have sat down with Christ in the heavenlies.* In other places their reign is set in the future (2 Tim 2.12; Rev 3.21; 5.10; 20.4; 22.5; cf. 1 Cor 6.2f; 1 Pet 2.9; Mt 13.43; Rom 8.17, 30).” [Best, 219] “*From this position the believer derives every spiritual benefit. Hence, the position of being seated with Christ in the heavenlies gives the believer a heavenly status with heavenly power to overcome the power of sin and death.*” [Hoehner, 334] “[Heaven] has in Scripture a wide application. It means not only the atmospheric heavens in which the clouds have their habitation; and the stellar heavens in which the sun, moon and stars dwell; and the third heavens, i.e. the place where God specially manifests his presence and where the glorified body of Christ now is, but also the state into which believers are introduced by their regeneration. *In this last sense it coincides with one of the meanings of the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven.’ It is that state of purity, exaltation and favour with God, into which his children are even in this world introduced. The opposite state is called ‘the kingdom of Satan;’ and hence men are said to be translated from ‘the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.’ It is in this sense of the word that we are said, Phil. 3, 20, to be the citizens of heaven. We, if Christians, belong not to the earth, but heaven; we are within the pale of God’s kingdom; we are under its laws; we have in Christ a title to its privileges and blessings, and possess, alas! in what humble measure, its spirit. Though we occupy the lowest place of this kingdom, the mere suburbs of the heavenly city, still we are in it. The language of the apostle in the context will appear the less strange, if we apprehend aright the greatness of the change which believers, even in this life, experience. They are freed from the condemnation of the law, from the dominion of Satan, from the lethargy and pollution of spiritual death; they are reconciled to God, made partakers of his Spirit, as the principle of everlasting life; they are adopted into his family and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God both in this life and in that which is to come.*” [Hodge, 114f]

“SEATED IN THE HEAVENLIES” DOES NOT ELIMINATE ALL EARTHLY STRUGGLE — “*The new dominion into which believers have been initiated is firmly anchored within history. The writer is under no illusion that sharing in Christ’s victory brings removal from the sphere of conflict. The rest of the letter provides ample evidence that those who have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies are at the same time those who must walk in the world (cf. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2, 8, 15) and stand in the midst of the continuing battle with the powers (cf. 6:11-16).*” [Lincoln, 109] “*Believers live simultaneously*

in two spheres, earth and heaven.... [The heavenly realms] are not the perfect heaven of later Christian thought, but a place where evil powers still fight to maintain their position (6.10ff). [Paul] does not then see believers who sit in the heavenlies as freed from the struggle with evil and sin, and in the second part of his letter he has much advice and exhortation to give to them for this struggle.... What does [Paul] mean by sitting in the heavenlies? In 1.20 Christ's seat in the heavenlies implies his superiority to the powers; in the heavenlies he occupies a position of authority, he reigns. We should expect the same to be intended of Christians; they reign, or rather, to be more precise in view of the use of σύν [sun, 'with'], they participate in Christ's reign. Yet it is not said that believers are exalted to the right hand of God as was Christ. Their position in the heavenlies is not then identical with his. Perhaps a little more can be learned from 3.10 where a cosmic role is given to the church. In 6.10ff believers are offered equipment for exercising authority over evil spiritual powers, for, unlike Christ, Christians so long as they live are still threatened by these powers.... [Believers tend to undervalue the importance of 'being seated with Christ', for example,] Origen appears to regard what is said as signifying no more than an attitude of mind; Thomas Aquinas, recognising the past tenses, speaks of the certitude of hope; Chrysostom writes round the problem by speaking of the body of Christ which goes to heaven with Christ its head.... The problem is not new to Christianity for no one supposes that when in Ps 110.1 the king is said to be at God's right hand he was actually sitting there, yet it is basic to the description of the Christian life; *on the one hand believers are still plagued by sin; on the other they already reign (Rom 5.17) in a new type of existence. [Paul] is faithful to both sides of this paradox but throughout the letter he tends to stress its second element and 2.6 taken out of the context of the letter is open to serious misunderstanding. Those who stress the first element also look forward more consistently to a future eschatological realisation of the second. The future is not stressed by [Paul] but it has not full disappeared* (e.g. 1.14, 18; 2.21; 4.4, 15f, 30; 5.5, 16, 21).” [Best, 220ff]

in Christ Jesus — ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, [en Christō Iēsou] This is not redundant because it underscores the reason we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ, because we are in him. It is our union with Christ that gives us the right to be in the heavenly realms. *“Since God’s action and purpose are never unrelated to Christ the sentence is rounded off by referring to him. While this might be taken as a reference to the corporate Christ (God exhibits his grace towards those who are in Christ) it is much easier to see Christ as the place where, or means whereby, God’s grace is exhibited. There is nothing vague about God’s grace; it is anchored in Christ.”* [Best, 225]

v. 7 — PURPOSE OF GOD’S GRACE — in order that he might demonstrate — ἵνα ἐνδείξηται [hina endeixētai] *This is called a ‘purpose clause.’ Paul is now giving the reason God made us alive / raised us / seated us together with Christ. “God does not raise believers to the heavenlies merely for their own good but that he might exhibit, or prove, the wealth of his grace.”* [Best, 223] *“The satisfaction of His love was God’s motive in quickening and raising them. The manifestation of His glory in its surpassing wealth is His final purpose in the same.”* [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 288] “Through the ‘in order that,’ this clause concludes the flow of thought begun in v 4 by indicating the purpose of the divine activity that has been depicted. *What God has done in making believers alive with Christ, raising them up with him and seating them with him in the heavenly realms, he has done not only for their sake but also as part of the larger purpose of displaying the richness of his grace. Such a thought is familiar from the berakah of 1:3-14, where the ultimate goal of salvation was seen as the glory of God (cf. 1:6, 12, 14). In particular, 1:6 expressed the goal of believers’ predestination to be sons and daughters of God as ‘the praise of the glory of his grace.’”* [Lincoln, 109] *“Why has God done all this? Why from eternity has he chosen us to be holy before him in love? Why has he made us accepted in the Beloved? Why when dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened us, raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ? The answer to these questions is given in this verse. It was, in order that, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. The manifestation of the grace of God, i. e. of his unmerited love, is declared to be the specific object of redemption. From this it follows that whatever clouds the grace of God, or clashes with the gratuitous nature of the blessings promised in the gospel, must be inconsistent with its nature and design. If the salvation of sinners be intended as an exhibition of the grace of God, it must of necessity be gratuitous.”* [Hodge, Ephesians] That the glory of God is the object of Scripture is beyond dispute:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Rev 4:11 KJV) All things were created for Him! This universe is only here for the pleasure / will of Jesus Christ!

“Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Rom 9:21-24 NKJV) All people exist for the glory of Christ, even the unsaved. God sees two types of people: vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy. One group will appear before the Great White Throne (Rev 19: 11-15) and will bow before God. They will give an account of their lives and be judged *without mercy* (Heb 10:28,29) and cast into everlasting destruction. They will glorify the patience, holiness and righteousness of our sinless God. They are the vessels of wrath. The other group, the vessels of mercy, will appear before God’s throne as well but that throne will be circled about with a rainbow (Rev 4:3), a symbol of mercy. They too will give an account of their lives but their sins have been judged in the Person of Christ and they are forgiven. They will forever be set forth as examples of the mercy and grace of our great God. *Either in eternal wrath or in eternal bliss, all of mankind will glorify Christ.*

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” (Col 1:16 NKJV) We are alive today, breathing, our hearts beating, for one reason: for the pleasure of our Saviour. The earth, moon, planets, sun exist for one reason: for the pleasure of our Saviour.

I have looked back over my life and grieved at some of the many sins I have committed. My start in life was very humanistic as I was brought up in a household without Christ. It was not an ‘evil’ household; my parents were what could be said to be ‘good’ parents who tried to take care of their children. But it was a household without Christ and when there were problems, we turned to the world or humanism or psychiatrists but never to the Scriptures. God has been merciful not just on me but many within my immediate family and brought us to Christ (praise God!). But I have known many who were brought up in the house of God and their lives are so different than mine due to their right beginnings (I am fully aware they are not perfect and have struggles like anyone else, but by grace God has spared them from some of the sins of which I was acquainted). Then a couple years ago when I was lost in my thoughts of wishing I had been brought up differently and wishing I did not have to struggle with some of my demons, when the Lord spoke to my heart: *‘It does not matter. **My life is not about me!** My life is about Christ and His glory!’* So while I could wish things were different as I had been growing up, I now understand my life as-is glorifies and honors Christ, and will throughout all eternity. That is why I have been given the life I have been given. That is why I exist and my selfish desires for *‘this not to have happened’* or *‘that to have happened’* does not matter. It is all for His honor, for His glory. That is sufficient.

demonstrate = ἐνδείξται [endeixētai] means “to show, to demonstrate.” The word is used 11x in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, and nowhere else in the NT. “The middle voice gives the reference which the English sentence itself implies, that *the exhibition is for His own purpose, for His own glory.*” [Alford, 93] “Shew: to other orders of being, angelic or other. Cp. iii.10.” [Moule, 72]

‘AGES’ = PLURAL — in the coming ages — ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις [en tois aiōsin tois eperchomenois] This indicates the time when God will demonstrate his kindness. YLT translates it as follows: *‘in the ages that are coming.’* “[L]iterally, *‘in the ages that are coming one upon another,’ that is, in the eternal ages that roll in, one after another in the future eternity after the universe is returned to its pristine glory.*” [Wuest, 68] “*The plural ‘ages’ is not simply a stylistic variation of the singular, but a more general conception, implying ‘one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach.’ In the light of this meaning it may thus be claimed: ‘Throughout time and in eternity the church, this society of pardoned rebels, is designed by God to be the masterpiece of his goodness. When he brings into being the reconciled universe of the future, the church will provide the pattern after which it will be modeled.’*” [O’Brien, 173; see also Bruce, 288] “*If the plural is to be taken as a genuine plural, then it is better to understand it as suggesting that the future consists of a number of periods of time. The aeons would be the future history of this age and of the age to come.... [T]he verse suggests that [Paul] sees a cosmic significance in Christian salvation; God is concerned with more than the salvation of individuals or even of the church as a whole.*” [Best, 223f] “All future periods of development in His Kingdom. *The phrase must not be restricted to the future history of [believers] on earth; it is akin rather to the frequent formula for the eternal future, ‘unto the ages of the ages,’ and cp. esp. Jude 25, ‘both now and unto all the ages.’ ‘The King of the Ages’ (1 Tim. i. 17) alone knows what great ‘dispensations’ are included in the one Eternity.*” [Moule, 72] “The words, *in the ages to come*, are by many understood to refer to the future generations in this world.... Calvin, who understands the apostle to refer specially to the calling of the Gentiles in the preceding verses, gives the same explanation.... As however there is nothing in the context to restrict the language of the apostle to the Gentiles, so there is nothing to limit the general expression ages to come to the present life. Others, restricting verse 6th to the resurrection of the body, which is to take place at the second advent of Christ, understand the phrase in question to mean the ‘world to come,’ or the period subsequent to Christ’s second coming. Then, when the saints are raised up in glory, and not before, will the kindness of God towards them be revealed. But the preceding verse does not refer exclusively to the final resurrection of the dead, and therefore this phrase does not designate the period subsequent to that event. *It is better therefore to take it without limitation, for all future time.*” [Hodge, Ephesians]

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD SHOWING FORTH HIS GRACE IN THE COMING AGES — “[Paul’s] thought is that God has accomplished the resurrection and heavenly session of believers with Christ in order to show the immensity of his grace in a future in which age succeeds age. The significance of this assertion is threefold.

- First, *the new order which has begun has a future.* [Paul] knows himself to be in the decisive period of God’s redemptive activity, which was inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, but which is yet to reach its consummation in the coming ages.
- Second, *the divine activity on behalf of believers was of such a finality that it will continue as the display of his grace into those coming ages.*
- Third, *what God has done is now a reality for believers, but only in the coming ages will it be fully shown for what it is.* Only then will it become evident to all what an abundance of grace and kindness God has bestowed on his people through Christ.” [Lincoln, 111] C. S. Lewis said it like this: “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – These are mortal, and their life is to ours as

the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” [C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*]

the surpassing wealth of his grace — τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ [to *hyperballon ploutos tēs charitos autou*] “*Hyperballon*” is the same word as discussed in 1:19 and could be translated “*surpassing, extraordinary, exceeding.*” The word is only used by Paul. O’Brien quotes several Greek authorities that understand the word “surpassing” as an “expression of degree... implying comparison” and the word “wealth” as a “high degree of something.” He states an appropriate rendering is “*his very, very great grace*” [O’Brien, 172] “*[I]n light of the parallels between 1:19-21 and 2:4-7 already underlined, it can be said that if the raising of Christ from death to sit in the heavenly realms was the supreme demonstration of God’s surpassing power, then the raising of believers from spiritual death to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms is the supreme demonstration of God’s surpassing grace.*” [Lincoln, 110]

in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus — ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [en *chrēstotēti eph’ hēmas en Christō Iēsou*] This is a cluster of three prepositional phrases: “*in kindness*” + “*toward us*” + “*in Christ Jesus*”

kindness = χρηστότητι [chrēstotēti] is used in the LXX 15x and is always translated from the same word to mean “*good, goodness.*” It is used 10x in the NT, only by Paul and only here in Ephesians. In the NT it has the sense of “*goodness, kindness, generosity.*” It carries the connotation of that which is appropriate or fitting; therefore “*God will demonstrate the wealth of his grace in the sphere of that which is his goodness or kindness appropriate to God.*”

toward us = ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς [eph’ hēmas] shows direction, indicating the kindness is directed toward believers.

in Christ Jesus = ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [en Christō Iēsou] could give the idea of “*in connection with,*” but preferably gives the location of the action of kindness. “*It deserves notice, also, that the name of Christ is repeated; for no grace, no love, must be expected by us from God, except through his mediation.*” [Calvin, Ephesians] “Since God’s action and purpose are never unrelated to Christ the sentence is rounded off by referring to him. While this might be taken as a reference to the corporate Christ (God exhibits his grace towards those who are in Christ) it is much easier to see Christ as the place where, or means whereby, God’s grace is exhibited. *There is nothing vague about God’s grace; it is anchored in Christ.*” [Best, 225] “The work of kindness located in Christ Jesus is the wonderful salvation wrought by him and not by us. Because we are located in Christ we were made alive with him, raised with him, seated with him in the heavenlies, hence the kindness of God toward us. Our own efforts would have been rejected by God, but we are accepted because we are in Christ.” [Hoehner, 339]