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Grace CL305

Spring 2012

11-May 24, 33 Works of Grace: Numbers 17-21, pgs. 22-24

#17. Circumcised in Christ. One of the Apostle's threefold divisions of humanity is the "Uncircumcision" with reference to unregenerate Gentiles, "the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands" with reference to Israel, and "the circumcision made without hands" with reference to Christians (Eph. 2:11; Col. 2:11).

However, the important truth that the believer has been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands and wholly apart from the flesh, is the grace position which is now in view. In the Colossians passage (2:11), the believer's spiritual circumcision is said to be the "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

*The words **putting off** are from the noun *apekdysei* ("total breaking away from", "to divest oneself of"), which occurs only here in the New Testament. This putting off of the old life occurs at the moment of salvation, when a believer is **buried with Christ in baptism** by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13) **and is raised with Him** to new life. This co-burial and co-resurrection is pictured in baptism." (Rom. 6:4).¹*

Two closely related words occur in this passage, namely, *body* (σῶμα) and *flesh* (σάρξ). The physical body does not commit sin except as it is dominated by the flesh—which flesh includes the soul and spirit, and manifests that fallen nature which all possess, saved and unsaved alike. The physical body is not put off in a literal sense, but, being the instrument or sphere of sin's manifestation, the flesh with its "body of sin" may be annulled (Rom. 6:6), or rendered inoperative for the time being.

As the sin nature was judged by Christ in His death, so the believer, because of his vital place in Christ, partakes of that "putting off" which Christ accomplished, and which fell as a circumcision upon Him and becomes a spiritual circumcision to the one for whom Christ substituted. It is a circumcision made "without hands." To stand thus before God as one whose sin nature, or flesh, has been judged and for whom a way of deliverance from the dominion of the flesh has been secured, is a position which grace has provided, and is blessed indeed.

Other passages on this inward circumcision: Ro. 2:29 aligned with Deut. 10:16

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#18. Partakers of the Holy and Royal Priesthood. In his First Epistle, Peter declares that the believers form a holy priesthood (2:5) and a royal priesthood (2:9), and their royalty is again asserted by John when in Revelation 1:6 John asserts that that we have been made "kings and priests."

¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Col 2:11–12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The truth that Christ is a king-priest is reflected here. The believer derives all his positions and possessions from Christ. The child of God is therefore a priest now because of his relation to Christ the High Priest, and he will yet reign with Christ a thousand years—when Christ takes His earthly throne (Rev. 5:10; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

Priesthood has passed through certain well-defined stages or aspects. The patriarchs were priests over their households. Later, to Israel was offered the privilege of becoming a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6); but it was conditional and Israel failed in the realization of this blessing, and the priesthood was restricted to one tribe or family.

On a grace basis, in which God undertakes through the merit of His Son, in the New Testament is introduced the true and final realization of a kingdom of priests. Every saved person in the present age is a priest unto God. The Old Testament priest is the type of the New Testament priest. Israel had a priesthood; the Church is a priesthood. To be a priest unto God with the certainty of a kingly reign is a position to which the one who believes on Christ is brought, through the saving grace of God.

For a very cool picture of this see 2 Sam. 8:18 & 1 Chron. 18:17

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#19. A Chosen Generation, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People. All three of these designations (1 Pet. 2:9) refer to one and the same general idea, namely, that the company of believers of this age—individuals called out from the Jews and Gentiles alike—are different from the unsaved Jew and Gentile to the extent to which thirty-three stupendous miracles transform them.

They are a *generation*, not in the sense that they are restricted to one span of human life, but in the sense that they are the offspring of God.

They are a *nation* in the sense that they are separate, a distinct grouping among all the peoples of the earth.

They are a *peculiar people* in the sense that they are born of God and are therefore not of this *cosmos* world.

They are not enjoined to try to be peculiar; any people in this world who are citizens of heaven, perfected in Christ, and appointed to live in the power of and to the glory of God, cannot but be peculiar.

These three designations represent permanent positions to which the believer has been brought and they, likewise, make a large contribution to the sum total of all the riches of divine grace.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#20. Heavenly Citizens. Under this consideration, commonwealth privilege, or what is better known as *citizenship*, is in view. Writing of the estate of the Ephesians, who were Gentiles before they were saved, the Apostle states that they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” Israel’s citizenship, though earthly, was specifically recognized by God as separate from all other peoples. Into this position no Gentile could come except as a proselyte. Thus it is said that the Gentile, being a stranger to Israel’s

commonwealth, had not so much as any divine recognition; yet immeasurably removed and heaven-high above even Israel's commonwealth is the Christian's citizenship in heaven.

Of Christians it is written, "For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, R.V.); their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), and they are said to have "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). To enforce the same truth, the Apostle also writes, "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). Actual presence in heaven is an assured experience for all who are saved (2 Cor. 5:8); but citizenship itself—whether realized at the present moment or not—is an abiding position accorded to all who believe.

In truth, the occupation of that citizenship by instant removal from this sphere would be the normal experience for each Christian when he is saved. To remain here after citizenship has been acquired in heaven creates a peculiar situation. In recognition of this abnormal condition, the child of God is styled a "stranger and pilgrim" (1 Pet. 2:11; cf. Heb. 11:13) as related to this *cosmos* world-system. In like manner, he is said to be an "ambassador" for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). To remain here as a witness, a stranger, a pilgrim, and an ambassador is but a momentary experience; the heavenly citizenship will be enjoyed forever. It is a glorious feature of the riches of divine grace.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#21. Of the Family and Household of God. Closely akin to citizenship and yet more restricted in their extent, are the positions the Christian is said to occupy in the family and household of God. As has been observed, there are various fatherhood relations which God sustains; but none in relation to His creatures is so perfect, so enriching, or so enduring as that which He bears to the household and family of the saints.

So great a change has been wrought in the estate of those who are saved respecting their kinship to God, that it is written of them: "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

With this position an obligation arises which makes its claim upon every member of the household. Of this claim the Apostle writes: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

In the present human relationship sustained in the *cosmos* world, there is, of necessity, but a limited difference observable between the saved and unsaved; yet those who comprise the household of faith are completely separated unto God, and into that family none could ever enter who sustains no true relation to God as his Father.

Human organizations, including the visible church, may include a mixed multitude, but "the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). In a great house there are some vessels to honor and some to dishonor, some of gold and silver, and some of wood and of earth. If a man purge himself from vessels of dishonor, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:20–21).

This picture of household relationships does not imply that there are those in the family of God who are not saved; the truth set forth is that not all believers are, in their daily life, as yielded to God as they might

be, and that by self-dedication they may be advanced from the position of vessels of dishonor —of wood or of earth—to the position and substance of vessels of honor—of gold and of silver.

Like citizenship in heaven, a participation in the household and family of God is a position exalted as high as heaven itself, and honorable to the degree of infinity. Thus there is correspondence with all other features of the riches of divine grace.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?