

CHAPTER VI

THE GRACE OF GOD

A. INTRODUCTION

1. By way of illustration, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes:

This word "grace" is one of the great words of the New Testament. It is not surprising that Philip Doddridge in the eighteenth century should write as follows:

Grace! 'Tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear:
Heaven with the echo shall resound
And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.

There is no more wonderful word than "grace". . . . What is your reaction to this word? In many ways this is the acid test of any profession of the Christian faith. The Christian is one who reacts in the same way as Philip Doddridge in the lines that I have just quoted. The same thought is also expressed by Charles Wesley:

His only righteousness I show,
His saving grace proclaim.

Do you feel that this word "grace" opens the very gates of heaven to you? That is really what it means to be a Christian.¹

At the outset of studying the grace of God in this chapter, we would encourage distinguishing between grace as a cool theological topic and the biblical perspective of grace, with which Lloyd-Jones challenges us, that addresses man as a great sinner, thoroughly lost, and its sovereign, particular saving dominion that brings about wonder, passion, worship and indomitable spiritual life.

2. By way of illustration, when the light of God's truth concerning "grace" dawned upon Martin Luther, he used those very terms that Lloyd-Jones related about it being "a gate to heaven." With regard to his quest to understand the gospel which Paul expounds in Romans, he writes:

¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, Atonement and Justification*, pp. 57-8.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by faith'. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open gates into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven. . . . If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love.²

3. Here then we ought to remind ourselves, as Luther has taught us because of his passionate quest, of the priority of knowing a gracious God in our quest for personal encounter with His grace in our own lives.

a. The preoccupation of multitudes of religious people today is how they might experience God's grace and appear gracious before men. God is perceived as a utilitarian vehicle of grace.

(1) For many, the supreme end of life is the attainment of genuine fulfillment, personal happiness, bubbling vitality, real personal identity, and a satisfying self-image, frequently via religion. These people may even agree that they need grace to attain this end. But God is merely perceived as a useful means to an end and not gloriously gracious in Himself. It ought not to surprise us then that such people never attain true graciousness. Whereas the English preacher Samuel Davies has written:

Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine.

(2) In contrast with this modern day pervasive subjectivity is the *primary* search of Martin Luther, in the midst of being overwhelmed with the justice of God and the strictures of a cloistered life as an Augustinian monk, not for the answer to the question, "How can I receive grace and be gracious?" but for a gracious God Himself and reconciliation with Him. Hence the focus here is upon God and not man, that is knowing His gracious character. This is not a trivial distinction since it strikes at the heart of contemporary man-centeredness in church life..

b. The difference between these two concepts is crucial and fundamental. The ramifications effect evangelism and personal spiritual growth.

² Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 49-50.

- (1) The search for a gracious God should find its fulfillment in the embrace of the good news concerning a God of grace who is adored for who He is and not simply for what He does. It is this God-centered emphasis which is central to the New Testament and lacking today. Supremely, God is gracious in Himself and must be adored as such. Our study of this attribute seeks to regain this emphasis. So Francis Xavier wrote:

My God, I love Thee; not because
I hope for Heav'n thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
May eternally die.

E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing,
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my eternal King.

- (2) However, a *primary* search for grace that satisfies my groaning condition, based on the *assumption* that God is gracious, only leads to subjective frustration without the longed for fulfillment. Growth in grace will only be experienced when I continue to praise and enjoy God as being wonderfully gracious in Himself. The Christian ought to be frequently exhorting himself, "Behold [the lovingkindness/grace of] your God. . . . Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isa. 40:9b-11).

B. THE GRACE OF GOOD AS AN ASPECT OF HIS LOVE

1. The distinctive nature of God's gracious character.

Whereas God is essentially and admirably good, His expression of that goodness towards thoroughly polluted and rebellious mankind is that facet of love called grace.

- a. Grace is God's goodness bestowed upon man in the face of his unholy badness, his sinfulness and misery, his great guilt, there being no rightful claim to it, no merit to obtain it, no ground for the deserving of it, because of man's utter disqualifying character.

- (1) In the Old Testament, the most important term is the Hebrew word חֶסֶד, *chesed*, used 240 times, which describes God's loyal, covenant love and mercy, His steadfast faithfulness and lovingkindness that confronts man's

unfaithfulness and ungodliness. "They [Israel] refused to listen, and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; and You did not forsake them." (Neh. 9:17; cf. Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-11; Jonah 4:2). God's promise to save and keep according to His sovereign, electing, covenantal determination, knows only unremitting commitment, irregardless of human failure in the history of Israel. There is also חֵן, chēn, used 69 times, which means grace as favor, compassion, and personal graciousness (Prov. Ps. 45:2; 22:11); it is first mentioned in Genesis 6:8: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."

(2) In the New Testament, the most important term is the Greek word χάρις, charis, which, in the context of God's relationship with man, describes His free, gratis favor and mercy bestowed upon sinful and guilty man without regard to absent worthiness and present unworthiness. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His [God the Father's] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24; cf. 4:4-5; 5:15; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11). Here the basis of this mercy bestowed upon sinners is the same covenant faithfulness promised in the Old Testament to Abraham and David, followed by the promise of "an everlasting covenant" and a "new covenant" and "a covenant of peace" for Israel (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-40; Ezek. 37:24-28), and the climactic, fulfilling "eternal covenant" cut in terms of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:20). All of this is grounded upon God's sovereign initiative and accomplishment for the purpose of His glory; further it is in spite of man's strenuous rebellion against the goodness and kindness of God.

b. Grace is not merely God's love in the face of man's indifference or supposed neutrality, but rather His deep and determined affection directed toward the openly hostile and aggressive sinner. "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you [by means of gospel grace] in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col. 1:21-22; cf. Rom. 5:1-2, 6-8; Eph. 2:1-9). Hence Grace is not merely unmerited favor, but also demerited favor. God is for man even though man plots and schemes and positively opposes God (Ps. 2:1-3).

(1) Grace is inadequately described by the popular anagram, "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." But why the necessity of this grace? Such a representation is wholly mute concerning man's essential problem which

grace addresses; it does not in any way speak of man's sinful antagonism against God upon which grace is predicated.

- (2) Grace is not simply that God is kind towards sinners who come short of offering acceptable righteousness and defile themselves, but rather He is kind towards sinners who, like Saul who became Paul, are militantly averse to God and as a consequence store up demerit. "Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison" (Acts 8:3). "In Jerusalem, not only did I [Saul] lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities." (Acts 26:9-14). Yet Paul later testifies, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life" (I Tim. 1:15-16).
- (3) So in Psalm 2 we see this conflict in stark relief, that is the supremacy of the grace of God over a rebellious world. God alone takes the initiative in determining to save sinners. Man is not merely indifferent toward God, but a militant rebel, an enemy of God that only grace can conquer (Rom. 5:20-21; Eph. 2:1-10).
 - (a) The nations of the world, in an unholy alliance, strenuously conspire and rage against the moral restraints of a holy God and His Son Jesus Christ, like a wild kicking mule, vs. 1-3.
 - (b) The LORD scoffs at this human arrogance. Yet Jesus Christ has sovereignly been appointed by His Father as ruler over Zion/Jerusalem, as well as the Gentile nations, vs. 4-9.
 - (c) Nevertheless God graciously persists in calling upon the conspirators to bow with faith allegiance before His Son. Such worshippers will be blessed while persistent rebels will suffer the wrath of God, vs. 10-12.
- c. Grace is not simply the distinctive love of the historic Lord Jesus for sinners, but rather the identical love of the three Persons of the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The love of God the Son is essentially that of the love of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

- (1) There is the grace of God the Father which is mediated to sinners through His gracious Son. So those who have “sinned” are “justified as a gift by His [the Father’s] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24; cf. Acts 20:24, 32; Rom. 5:15; Philem. 3).
 - (2) There is the grace of God the Son which is actively manifest in his earthly condescension. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich (II Cor. 8:9).
 - (3) There is the grace of God the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of the truth who proceeds from the Father,” who Jesus said “will testify about Me” (John 15:26). This Spirit of God is the “the Spirit of the grace” which witnesses to “the Son of God” and “the blood of the covenant:” (Heb. 10:29).
- d. Grace is God’s love for sinners that is purposed and originates solely within the heart of the Eternal; it does not come in response to worth and value in man. The grace of God is “according to the kind intention of His will, . . . the mystery of His will, . . . according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11).
- (1) “Being justified freely [as a gift] by His grace” (Rom. 3:24; cf. John 15:25), means that within the sinner there is no merit or cause for him to be justified, no effective human persuasion. The freedom here resides with God, being His grace freely purposed and provided. The cause exclusively resides within God; it is for this reason that it is often called “free grace.”
 - (2) However, God’s grace is not capricious or fickle, but according to holy wisdom, “the kind intention of His will, . . . to the praise and glory of His grace. . . . In all wisdom and insight He [God the Father] made known to us the mystery of His will” (Eph. 1:5, 8-9). Yet this wisdom is also conditioned by righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26; I Cor. 1:30).
 - (3) Therefore, grace is love that is purposeful, intentional, willful, steadfast, the emphasis being placed on God’s volition and loyalty to His promise. He is, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth” (Jas. 1:17-18; cf. John 3:16; Rom. 11:29; I John 4:10).
- e. Grace is *not* love that overlooks, neglects, or disregards sin. This is worldly perversion born of a lack of understanding concerning the immutable moral character of God. If God were to sweep sin under the carpet, so to speak, He would not be gracious, but unholy and without integrity. At the establishment

of the garden of Eden God declared concerning the tree of life, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die [as judgment]” (Gen. 3:3; cf. 2:17; Rom. 3:23). As a result, following Adam’s transgression, “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned [in Adam?]” (Rom. 5:12). So this judgment of God came upon “all men” for “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23; 5:18-19). Yet the grace of God righteously pardons this sin through faith in the atoning righteous Son of God (I John 1:9).

- (1) Every sin of every sinner with whom God deals with graciously is also dealt with justly! For this reason the grace of God is always righteous grace, providing righteousness and salvation. The Lord “put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head” (Isa. 59:17; cf. 45:8; 61:10; 62:1).
- (2) Grace is God’s love, with integrity, for sinners, so that He maintains unblemished justice and yet justifies the sinner. So that in Christ being “a propitiation [atoning sacrifice] in His blood,” God “demonstrated His righteousness,” being “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26).

f. J. I. Packer comments:

The grace of God is love freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity. We have seen why the thought of grace means so little to some church people - namely, because they do not share the beliefs about God and man which it presupposes. Now we have to ask: why should this thought mean so much to others? The answer is not far to seek; indeed, it is evident from what has already been said. It is surely clear that, once a man is convinced that his state and need are as described, the New Testament gospel of grace cannot but sweep him off his feet with wonder and joy. For it tells how our Judge has become our Savior.³

2. The major categories of God’s grace.

Common grace, preceding grace, and saving grace, are facets of the one jewel of grace, and as we have already seen, all presuppose man to be a guilty sinner totally void of merit in the sight of God. They all reflect, in varying ways, aspects of God’s broad loving concern for mankind, both in general and in particular. There is also progression here from the universal bestowing of common grace to the particular pursuit of preceding grace and on to the particular realization of saving grace.

³ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 120.

a. Common grace.

Common grace is universal grace and favor that, although non-redemptive, touches every human creature to whom God has given existence, no matter how defiled a person may be, whether as a reprobate or as one of God's elect.

(1) It is that general, comprehensive, and kind providence of God mediated through His Spirit which finds *all of creation* under the dominion of sin (Rom. 8:19-22). John Murray describes it as, "every favor of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God."⁴

(a) Common grace accounts for sinful man having some knowledge of God, some appreciation of truth, some virtue on a horizontal, man to man basis, and a variety of talents and accomplishments. Such was the case with Abimelech, a king of Philistia (Gen. 20:1-18), a Jewish scribe (Mark 12:28-34), and Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:1-4). Broad travel will sometimes lead to our meeting certain pagan people who yet evidence considerable civil kindness, hospitality, and integrity.

(b) While common grace focuses upon a degree of favor and kindness that man receives from God as a sinner, that is in a universal and multitudinous sense, benevolence focuses upon man, both before the Fall and after, who is in need of innate support and maintenance, and thus receives generous welfare (Acts 14:16-17). Common grace comes to all men as sinners; benevolence comes as welfare to a needy creation. Hence common grace and benevolence are closely connected.

(2) Various aspects of common grace include:

(a) The living existence of all men as sinners (Lam. 3:22; Acts 17:27-8). Every breath we breathe is a wonder of common grace since God could have justly extinguished the whole human race in immediate judgment. He defers the execution of our sentence by means of comprehensive grace so that we might receive the offer of a full pardon by particular grace (Rom. 3:24-25).

(b) Restraint upon sin, divine wrath, evil, and the bestowal of good with limitation, the overlooking of "the times of ignorance" for a determined period of time (Acts 17:23, 30), "the forbearance of God [whereby] He passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom. 3:25).

⁴ John Murray, *Collected Writings*, II, p. 96.

John Murray writes that,

The evidence drawn from Scripture, then, compels the conclusion that the world as a whole, though subject to the curse incident to sin, receives the showers of manifold blessing, that men who still lie under the divine condemnation of sin, including even those who will finally suffer the full weight of that condemnation in perdition, are the recipients in this life of multiple favors that proceed from God's lovingkindness, that of unregenerate men is predicated moral good that externally or formally is that required by the law of God, that unregenerate men who come into contact with the revelation of God's grace in the gospel may even taste the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and that in the institutions of civil righteousness and order we have a divine provision that ensures even for the ungodly restraint upon their evil works and outward tranquility and peace. So that viewing God's government of this world, even from the aspect of his common or non-saving grace, we may say, the earth is full of the glory of the Lord and all peoples see his glory.⁵

- (c) The general call and wooing of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 6:3; Acts 7:51). Man's accountability is heightened by means of some knowledge of God, He "being understood through what has been made" (Rom. 1:20) and "the work of the Law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:14-16). Then there is the truth of the gospel communicated not only to the ears of all men, but also to their hearts. This is not a mere presence, but an earnest, persuasive striving through the convicting Holy Spirit of "sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:7-11). This work is quite distinct from the particular gift of saving faith that the Holy Spirit also bestows.
- (d) The universal offer of saving grace (John 3:16; 6:35; 7:37). The bona fide offer of the gospel, through the Holy Spirit, is to all of mankind. ²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30). "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). So mankind, being spiritually blind, is yet confronted with the truth of the gospel (Luke 4:18; John 9:39). This spiritual inability and impotence also includes mankind's deafness (John 8:3; Acts 7:56-58), deadness (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13), and unwillingness (John 3:19; 5:40). However it is in man's unwillingness to believe that he is accountable

⁵ Ibid., pp. 97-112.

(John 5:40). God's universal offer is genuine in that "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).⁶

- (3) Although common grace is for the temporal blessing of all souls, such goodness ought to be pointed out to all souls, even as Paul did at Lystra concerning "a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. . . . Yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15-17). Likewise at the Areopagus in Athens, Paul made proclamation concerning "the God who made the world and all things in it. . . . He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24).
- (a) Common grace ought to result in repentance, a humble turning to the only living God, though man often responds with presumption concerning this mercy, "thinking lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience" (Rom. 2:4-5).
- (b) Common grace ought to result in praise, though man often responds with perversion of this kindness, "exchanging the truth of God for a lie and worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25; cf. Ps. 65:4-13; 104:1-35).
- (c) Common grace ought to be properly understood in relation to saving grace. The former is according to time, the latter according to eternity, the former is concerning the health of the body, the latter according to the health of the soul, the former is according to universal interest, the latter according to particular, elective interest. Murray points out:

[W]e must jealously guard the distinction between the grace that is common and the grace that is saving. To change the terms, we must not obliterate the distinction between nature and grace. Saving grace differs in its nature, it differs in its purpose and it differs in its effect. But we must beware of a false dualism whereby we incline to regard special grace as nullifying or annihilating the good things it finds in that sphere upon which it falls. Common grace is after all God's grace. It is a gift of

⁶ John Owen, in upholding the particular definiteness of Christ's atonement, yet writes of a universal offer of that same gospel as follows: "A minister is not to make enquiry after, nor to trouble himself about, those secrets of the eternal mind of God, namely, — whom he purposeth to save, and whom he hath sent Christ to die for in particular. It is enough for them to search his revealed will, and thence take their *directions*, from whence they have their *commissions*. . . . They command and invite all to repent and believe; but they know not in particular on whom God will bestow repentance unto salvation, nor in whom he will effect the work of faith with power." *Works*, X, pp. 299-300.

God and 'every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (Jas. 1:17). Special grace does not annihilate but rather brings its redemptive, regenerative and sanctifying influence to bear upon every natural or common gift; it transforms all activities and departments of life; it brings every good gift into the service of the kingdom of God. Christianity is not a flight from nature; it is the renewal and sanctification of nature. It is not flight from the world; it is the evangelization of the world.⁷

b. Preceding grace.

(1) By definition, "preceding" or "preventing" or "prevenient" here all mean "to go before." Hence these terms refer to grace that comes to a person before or precedes conversion and is sometimes designated as "prevenient" grace. It is that particular measure of grace poured out upon God's elect before actual salvation and conversion; it effectually prepares, guides, instructs, and draws the sinner to Christ for saving grace. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. . . . No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws/leads/impels [ἐλκω, *helkō*] him" (John 6:37, 44-45).

(a) It is a particular work of grace that is to be distinguished from universal Wesleyan-Arminian "prevenient grace," which is said to be bestowed upon all of Adam's sinful race so as to restore limited ability, so that any man can savingly believe in Christ if he wills. John Wesley writes concerning John 1:9:

Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert, that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man [by Christ], together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world" [John 1:9]⁸

Wesley will elsewhere acknowledge that man is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3), yet here he vainly attempts to avoid saving particularity by means of an unbiblical application of the atonement.

(b) By way of personal illustration, John Bunyan describes this particular preventing grace in his own life before conversion.

Ibid., p. 117.

⁸ John Wesley, *Works*, X, pp. 229-30. We believe this to be a wrong understanding of John 1:9 which, as elsewhere in this Gospel (3:19; 8:12; 12:46), describes light confronting mankind in general as distinct from giving inward illumination of the soul. Refer to Barrett, *John*, pp. 134-5.

Yea, such prevalency had the lusts and fruits of the flesh in this poor soul of mine, that had not a miracle of precious grace prevented [gone before], I had not only perished by the stroke of eternal justice, but had also laid myself open, even to the stroke of those laws, which bring some to disgrace and open shame before the face of the world.⁹

(c) By way of explanation, Richard Sibbes writes:

Preventing mercy is the greatest. How many favors doth God prevent [go before] us with! We never asked for our being, nor for that tender love which our parents bore towards us in our tender years. We never asked for our . . . engrafting into Christ. What a motive therefore is that to stir us up, that . . . we may plead with the Lord, and say, Thou hadst a care of me before I had a being; and therefore much more wilt thou now have a care of me, whom thou hast reconciled unto thyself, and remember me in mercy for time to come.¹⁰

(d) By way of illustration, the Scottish hymn writer, James G. Small, drawing upon Hosea 11:1-4, has so aptly written:¹¹

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
 He loved me ere [before] I knew Him;
 He drew me with the cords of love,
 And thus He bound me to Him;
 And round my heart still closely twine
 Those ties which nought can sever,
 For I am His, and He is mine,
 For ever and for ever.

(2) Thus this particular preceding grace deals only with the elect of God since His choice of individuals “before the foundation of the world” suggests the necessity of their being divinely drawn toward saving faith in Christ and resultant conversion (Eph. 1:3-6; Col. 3:12). So particular prevenient grace is finally effectual (I Cor. 1:9), though it may be rejected for a period (Acts 8:1; 26:14). In this sense it is ultimately “irresistible” and “efficacious” grace as is so well illustrated in the particular grace that sovereignly operated and triumphed in the life of disturbed yet resistant Paul (Acts 8:1; 9:1-9; 26:14; 7:58; Gal. 1:15-16).

⁹ John Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 7.

¹⁰ Richard Sibbes, *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, VII, p. 198.

¹¹ James G. Small, *Trinity Hymnal*, 433.

- (a) Preventing grace not only protects the sinner from satanic claims, but also directs him along a hedged in way, as it were, that leads to the foot of the cross (Gen. 27:41-44). Here Christ welcomes those given to Him by His Father, and does not lose one (John 17:2, 6, 9, 12, 24).
- (b) Preventing grace effects the safe arrival and certain salvation of the chosen sinner, “by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood” (I Pet. 1:1-2). Here the work of the Spirit is preparatory for the obedience (of faith, Rom. 1:5; 16:26) and the application of Christ’s atoning blood (John 3:3-8; II Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5).
- (3) By way of illustration, in 1865 C. H. Spurgeon preached a sermon titled, “Prevenient Grace,” based upon Galatians 1:15. Under this title he includes as subdivisions, “formative, restraining, preparatory,” and “convicting grace.” He declares that,

Prevenient grace comes before regeneration and conversion. I think we sometimes overlook it. We do not attach enough importance to the grace of God in its dealings with men before he actually brings them to himself. Paul says that God had designs of love towards him even before he had called him out of the dead world into spiritual life. . . . It is a mercy for some men that they cannot do what they would. Ah! My fine fellow, if you could have had your own way, you would have been at the top of the mountain by now! So you think, but no, you would have been over the precipice long before this if God had let you climb at all, and so he has kept you in the valley because he has designs of love towards you, and because you shall not sin as others sin. Divine grace has its hand upon the bridle of your horse. . . . Another inch forward and you will be over the precipice and lost. And therefore God has put that hand there to throw your horse back on its haunches, and make you pause and think, and turn from the error of your ways. . . . Look at the life of St. Augustine, how wearily he wanders hither and thither with a death-thirst in his soul, that no fount of philosophy, or scholastic argument, or heretical teaching could ever assuage. He was aware of his unhappy estate, and turned his eye round the circle of the universe looking for peace, not fully conscious of what he wanted, though feeling an aching void the world could never fill. He had not found the center, fixed and steadfast, around which all else revolved in ceaseless change. Now, all this appetite, this hunger and thirst, I look upon as not of the devil, nor of the human heart alone. It was of God! He strips us of all our earthly joy and peace, that, shivering in the cold blast we might flee, when drawn by his Spirit, to the Man who is as a hiding-place from the storm, a cover from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.¹²

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, XI, pp. 589-600.

- (4) By way of application, let any Christian consider his own conversion and recall how God's preventing or preceding grace led him by many marvelous and often circuitous ways to the foot of the Cross. Ought not such an awareness cause him to erupt in praise of God as did Paul? "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (I Tim. 1:15-17; cf. Rom. 11:33-35; Gal. 1:13-16,).

c. Saving grace.

From the outset, we are not merely considering that grace of God which is supposed to be on offer to man. In this scenario, God propositions man and awaits for his response; man, being autonomous, determines whether to accept or reject this offer. This means that the end result is man's to determine and ultimately heaven is populated according to human decision. This, we propose, is popular man-centered theology that fails to comprehend the biblical truth of the sovereignty and actual saving nature of grace. In other words, we declare that saving grace has potency; it is not there simply to be taken as with an item at a self-service store! God does more than proposition a sinful man; He actually saves him, as is so dramatically seen in the conversion of Paul (Gal. 1:11-17). So he declares: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign [have dominion] through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20-21).

(1) It is grace that rescues the sinner.

- (a) Essentially, God provides and applies saving grace through the redemptive, atoning work of Christ to impotent, miserable, and guilty sinners (Rom. 3:9-26; Eph. 2:1-10; Tit. 3:3-7). This grace has several saving aspects:

- 1) In *justification*, God through Christ pronounces the unrighteous sinner to be not guilty and acceptably righteous (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-24, 28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 24). This is just grace.
- 2) In *redemption*, the sinner is delivered from the slave-market and captivity of sin through Christ's ransom sacrifice (Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 4:4-5). This is liberating grace.
- 3) In *substitution*, the sinner's judgement is vicariously born by an offended another who is yet willing and qualified according to the Father's just demands, namely the atonement of Christ (Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24). This is free and costly grace.

- 4) In *reconciliation*, God befriends the sinner, through Christ the mediator, by taking away that guilt and enmity which divide (II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 1:21-22). This is rapprochement grace.
- 5) In *adoption*, the sinner believing in Christ is lifted from sin's captivity as a slave and placed as a son and heir in God's kingdom (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5). This is filial grace.
- 6) In *sanctification*, the saved sinner yet continues to be saved through Christ's intercessory work, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the milk and meat of the Word of God (Matt. 4:4; Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:1-5; 8:1-17; I Cor. 1:3-9; Heb. 7:25; I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18). This is transforming grace.
- 7) In *glorification*, the saved sinner receives the consummation of his salvation, the promised full inheritance (Eph. 2:7). "When He [Jesus Christ] appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (I John 3:2). This is consummating, radiant grace.

(b) By way of illustration, A. W. Tozer writes:

No one was ever saved other than by grace, from Abel to the present moment. Since mankind was banished from the eastward Garden, none has ever returned to the divine favor except through the sheer goodness of God. And wherever grace found any man it was always by Jesus Christ. Grace indeed came by Jesus Christ, but it did not wait for His birth in the manger or His death on the cross before it became operative. Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The first man in human history to be reinstated in the fellowship of God came through faith in Christ. In olden times men looked forward to Christ's redeeming work; in later times they gaze back upon it, but always they came and they come by grace through faith. We must keep in mind also that the grace of God is infinite and eternal. As it had no beginning, so it can have no end, and being an attribute of God, it is boundless as infinitude.¹³

(c) By way of illustration, the Christian has certainly been saved by past tense grace (Eph. 1:13), is still being saved according to present tense grace (II Cor. 2:15), and will be saved consummately at his

¹³ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge Of The Holy*, p. 102.

glorification by future tense grace (Phil. 1:6; Jude 24). Thus John Newton could write:¹⁴

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

- (2) It is grace that is sovereign over the sinner.
- (a) By way of definition, Sovereign grace is that dominion and reign of grace which certainly and effectually accomplishes God's particular saving purposes, even though sin may rage with all of its foulness and power (Rom. 5:20-21).
- 1) God is sovereign in the particular distribution of grace ¹⁴ "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Rom. 9:14-16; cf. Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:11).
 - 2) God is sovereign in the application and maintenance of grace. ⁴ "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:4-6; cf. 2:8-10).
- (b) Sovereign grace contrasts with that impotent, offered grace which man, with his supposed autonomy, may freely accept or reject.
- 1) By way of illustration, of what use is it to place the most delectable food outside the tomb of Lazarus. Such offered grace, assuming ability that is nonexistent, has little value for a dead man unless he is first made alive (Eph. 2:1-7).
 - 2) The Father has not sent His beloved Son to suffer and die so that men *might* be saved. Otherwise, *might not* all men refuse to

¹⁴ John Newton, *Trinity Hymnal*, 402.

believe? Sovereign grace means that men *will* be saved (Luke 10:22; John 6:37, 44; 10:1-3, 11; 17:1-2, 6, 9, 12, 24; Rom. 8:32).

- 3) Thus, whoever God elects to salvation, He also, through appointed means, applies the gracious merits of Christ's atonement to believing sinners (Rom. 8:29-30; I Pet. 1:1-2). Such authentic faith is one means that God employs (Acts 13:48).
 - 4) By way of illustration, God does not, as it were, merely throw down a rope into the pit of man's predicament and invite him to haul himself out. Rather, he actually climbs down into the pit and lifts his sheep out (Luke 15:3-7).
- (c) By way of explanation, in a sermon entitled "Reigning Grace," C. H. Spurgeon comments on Romans 5:21 as follows:

Just as sin has reigned, and with despotic and irresistible power has ground his subjects in the very dust, and then cast them into the flames, so doth grace with irresistible goodness, constrain the chosen multitudes to yield obedience, and thus prepares them for eternal bliss. . . . I tell you brethren, if all the troubles that ever came from heaven, all the persecutions that ever came from earth, and all the afflictions that ever arose from hell, could meet on your poor devoted head, the reigning grace of God would make you master of them all. You have never need to fear. Storms are the triumph of his art, and grace can steer the ship the better for tempestuous waves. Trust in the Lord, and do good; rest thou on his grace, and hope thou in his mercy.¹⁵

- (d) Sovereign grace was the especial constant delight of the Apostle Paul because:
- 1) It is grace given in his mother's womb. "God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15).
 - 2) It is grace that is the gift of God. "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - 3) It is grace given to the chief of sinners. "13 Though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor, yet I was

¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, VI, pp. 349, 354.

shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (I Tim. 1:13-15).

- 4) It is grace that reigns over sin." ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20-21).
 - 5) It is grace that abounds. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (II Cor. 9:8).
- (3) It is grace that is free.
- (a) There are inadequate descriptions of the freeness of the gospel that abound today, as if it were like some free commercial offer. However Romans 3:24 declares something much more wonderful. Here the believing sinner is, "justified as a gift/freely [δωρεάν, dōrean] by His [God's] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."
 - 1) "Freely," δωρεάν, dōrean, here means, "without a cause," just as the same word in John 15:25 is used by Jesus to declare, "They hated me without a cause/freely [δωρεάν, dōrean]." There was no cause within Christ as to why He was hated; the cause was solely within man. So here man has no meritorious contribution to make, arising from within, that contributes toward his salvation; though man does contribute demeritorious corruption. The cause of justification is solely the gracious purpose of God.
 - 2) Hence, there is no good cause *within* the sinner which God would regard as a ground for justification. The only cause is *within* God, according to His gracious purpose. "He made known to us the mystery of His [God's] will, according to His [God's] kind intention which He purposed in Him [His Son]. . . . In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel

of His will" (Eph. 1:9, 10-11). Thus the believing sinner is justified gratuitously, or for gratis.

(b) By way of explanation, John Murray comments on Romans 3:24:

No element in Paul's doctrine of justification is more central than this - God's justifying act is not constrained to any extent or degree by anything that we are or do which could be esteemed as predisposing God to this act. And not only is it the case that nothing in us or done by us constrains to this act but all that is ours compels the opposite judgment - the whole world is brought in guilty before God (cf. vs. 9, 19). This action on God's part derives its whole motivation, explanation, and determination from what God himself is and does in the exercise of free and sovereign grace. Merit of any kind on the part of man, when brought into relation to justification, contradicts the first article of the Pauline doctrine and therefore of his gospel. It is the glory of the gospel of Christ that it is one of free grace.¹⁶

(c) However, as is common today, the term "free grace" can lend itself to misunderstanding.

1) It is not free grace that is received as cheap and easy.

a) Free grace is wholly gratis to the recipient, nevertheless costly with regard to the donor. Thus the recipient is deeply aware, respectful, and responsive concerning this cost. "2 Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Heb. 12:2-3 cf. II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8).

b) By way of illustration, "free" here does not relate to a "free sample" that one might choose and fancy to accept at a food store. Many a child, even a prodigal, has received a free inheritance. But the parents as benefactors have accumulated such an inheritance only at sacrificial cost to themselves. So the "freeness" here is indicative of the absolute purity of grace wholly on God the Father's part, concerning the offering up of His Son, that admits of no admixture in the slightest of human merit.

¹⁶ John Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, p. 115.

- 2) It is not free grace that is received with apathy.
 - a) By way of explanation, free grace is not offered to a man as he is offered a vacation package by a telemarketer. Rather, it is liberty offered to a miserable, agonizing, confined prisoner who is deservedly bound. Therefore his reception of free grace results in spontaneous jubilation, astonishment, praise, thanksgiving, and a sense of indebtedness, especially with regard to his emancipator.
 - b) Free grace confronts a man as being wholly unworthy of pardon and worthy of condemnation. Yet should such a criminal, before a judge, receive a free pardon, his response will not be casual but intense delight and rejoicing. Grace is regarded in proportion to the sinner's estimate of his sin, guilt, and condemnation (Luke 7:47). Only when personal corruption is truly understood is grace adored.
- 3) It is not free grace that is received for abuse.
 - a) Although grace abounds in Romans 5:17, 20, yet in Romans 6:1-2 Paul is repulsed by the thought that sin is justified by grace. ¹ "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Such an attitude is "disgraceful."
 - b) Rather, grace is to be the justification of both judicial and personal righteousness. ¹⁷ "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18). The grace that saves is the grace that is productive graciousness (Matt. 18:21-35).
- (4) It is grace that is rich to the believing sinner.
 - (a) In Ephesians 1:7; 2:7, the believer is declared to be the inheritor of spiritual treasure, that is the wealth of "the riches of His [God's] grace," which, according to Hebrews 6:9, may be "the things that accompany salvation," and proceed from grace.

- 1) By way of explanation, clearly Paul and the author of Hebrews envision a multitude of blessings that accrue to the genuine Christian through the gospel. But specifically what are these “riches”? While the following list of thirty categories is far from exhaustive,¹⁷ yet it does reflect something of the wealth that flows forth from the grace of God for the believer. Thus the child of God receives:
 - a) *Acknowledgment by God that he has been the object of particular loving interest from eternity past, before the foundation of the world.* Specifically he has been foreknown, predestinated, elected, chosen, called. “⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵ ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations’” (Jer. 1:4-5; cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 1:13-17; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; I Thess. 1:4; I Pet. 1:1-2).
 - b) *Regeneration from death in the soul unto the life of God.* “¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹³ And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:11, 13; cf. Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5-6).
 - c) *Justification by God for the unjust.* “¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace [hence reconciliation] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). “¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just [righteous] for the unjust [unrighteous], so that He might bring us to God [as former aliens], having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;” (I Pet. 3:18; cf. Rom. 3:2; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Titus 3:7;).
 - d) *Redemption by God from captivity to sin.* “¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (I Pet. 1:18-19). “Being justified

¹⁷ This list of “The Riches of Divine Grace” is an adaptation taken from Lewis Sperry Chafer’s *Systematic Theology*, III, pp. 230-266.

as a gift by His [God's] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24; cf. 8:23; Eph. 1:7);

- e) *Reconciliation to God from past alienation.* "17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." (II Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Eph. 2:13-18; Col. 1:19-23).
- f) *Peace with God through propitiation of His righteousness.* "19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds" (Col. 2:19-21; cf. Rom. 3:24-26; 5:1; I John 2:2; 4:10).
- g) *Adoption from slavery to sonship with God.* "4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:4-6; cf. Rom. 8:15, 23; Eph. 1:5).
- h) *Forgiveness of all sin through the satisfactory atonement of Jesus Christ.* "13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (Col. 2:13-14; cf. Eph. 1:7);
- i) *Marriage to Christ having died to the Mosaic law.* "1 The law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? 2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law

- concerning the husband. ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:1-4; cf. Rev. 19:7-9).
- j) *Freedom from condemnation and accusation.* "¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh," (Rom. 8:1-3; cf. John 5:24; Rom. 8: 33-34).
- k) *Freedom from the dominion of the law.* "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. . . . But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Gal. 3:23; 5:18; cf. 7:1-6; II Cor. 3:6-13).
- l) *Placement in the body of Christ through Spirit baptism.* "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4). "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (I Cor. 12:13)
- m) *Union with the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* "⁴ Preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4-6).
- n) *Declared, positional sanctification.* "⁹ But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the

people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (I Pet. 2:9-10; cf. I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Col. 3:12).

- o) *Security, having been given by the Father to the Son for certain, safe salvation and keeping.* "6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. . . . ¹² While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled" John 17:6, 12; cf. 6:37).
- p) *Citizenship in the heavenly household of God.* "¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19-22; cf. Phil. 3:20).
- q) *Deliverance from the power of darkness unto becoming children of light in Christ.* "¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:12-13; cf. John 8:12; Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; I Pet. 2:9).
- r) *Sealing by the Holy Spirit.* "¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13-14; cf. II Cor. 1:22).
- s) *Heirship and an imperishable inheritance from God with Christ.* "¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:16-17; cf. Gal. 4:7; I Pet. 1:3-4).

- t) *Inheritance of every spiritual blessing.* “³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph. 1:3-4).
- u) *Usefulness for the glorification of God.* “¹² To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:12, 14).
- v) *Reception of Christ's victorious spoils.* “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (I Cor. 12:7). “⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, ‘when He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’” (Eph. 4:7-8). “
- w) *Crowns of life and glory.* “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (Jas. 1:12). “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (I Pet. 5:4).
- x) *Appointment to rule the world and judge angels.* “² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?” (I Cor. 6:2-3).
- y) *Creation anew according to God's workmanship.* “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (II Cor. 5:17). “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

- z) *Reception of the blessings of Abraham as his seed.* “⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’ ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” (Gal. 3:7-9, 29).
- aa) *Participation in Christ’s fold and pasture.* “¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:1-18).
- bb) *Fellowship with the saints in Christ.* “¹ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3; cf. John 17:11, 21-23).
- cc) *Having access to God, that is access into His grace, access unto the Father, access with reassurance.* “For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). “¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2; cf. Heb. 4:16; 10:19-20).
- dd) *Glorification, into the immortal, incorruptible image of Christ.* “¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:18-19, 30; I Cor. 15:53; Col. 3:4; I John 3:2).
- 2) By way of illustration, a person may be an heir to a large and wealthy estate. However, unless he has read an inventory of his inheritance, he will not fully appreciate his actual possessions and the grace of his benefactor! A Christian ought to know all

about those inherited riches of grace that are bestowed through Jesus Christ. But if you are not a Christian, then you have no such inheritance, nor any interest in such spiritual wealth. Rather you must toil for Satan's wages which are well earned, namely death and judgment (Rom. 6:23).

- (b) In Ephesians 2:7, the believer is given hope "that in the ages to come He [God] might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." By way of explanation, Thomas Goodwin comments:

What is pardon of sin to heaven? It is but so many riches buried in the foundation. What is the Spirit's pouring forth here? It is but the earnest [down-payment] of that riches which is to come. All that he hath done here, it is but that he might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace on us, in ages to come, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. All that is done for us here, it is but like a lighter metal; as always in mines you shall have a lighter metal before you come to the mine itself. All the riches of grace expended upon us here, they are but that lighter metal to that great mine that is then to be broken up.¹⁸

According to the authority of Jesus Christ, the person who is not rich toward God in his soul is a fool (Luke 12:16-21). Further, it is that same Jesus Christ who, "though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Cor. 8:9). In spiritual terms, the rich/poor gap is as wide as our separation from Jesus Christ. So, "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col. 3:16); let the Word of God be "more desirable than much fine gold" (Ps. 19:10).

- (c) In I Timothy 6:17-19, the believer is to "instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." Hence the believer who is materially rich ought rather to fix his hope on the enjoyment of God's generous spiritual wealth. Then as a consequence he ought to be rich in good works.

¹⁸ Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, II, p. 308.

C. THE GRACE OF GOD EVIDENT IN THE BELIEVER

1. As God is gracious towards the rebellious sinner, so the redeemed sinner is consequently to be gracious towards other redeemed sinners as well as rebellious sinners who scorn even his Savior as well as himself. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (I John 3:14; 4:11; cf. Matt. 5:44).
 - a. Grace becomes a subject which the believer delights to study in detail. The gospel has become "our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Rom. 5:2; cf. I Pet. 5:12). Consequently "it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace" (Heb. 13:9). The believer's desire is to "grow/increase [αὐξάνω, auxanō] in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).
 - b. Grace motivates or constrains the believer to be gracious. Being born again, he reflects the character of his divine Progenitor. "¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (II Cor. 5:14-15; cf. Rom. 5:1-5). The doctrines of grace are productive of the grace of the doctrines.
 - c. Grace is implanted in the believer's soul through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, so that graces and gifts become evident (Gal. 5:22-23; I Pet. 4:10). However, this same Spirit uses "means of grace" through which grace is mediated to the child of God. Such "means of grace" include Bible study, prayer, preaching, teaching, witnessing, literature, Christian fellowship, hymnody, etc.
 - d. Grace becomes an operative principle in the believer whereby the regenerate soul is stimulated to respond, in heart and life, according to greater understanding of the gracious heart of God. As "partakers of the divine nature," (II Pet. 1:3), Christians express active graciousness. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21); "We love, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).
 - e. Grace is an inner principle and dynamic that contrasts with the impotence of the Law. "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the [righteous] requirement [essence] of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4).

2. The parable of the Unforgiving Debtor best illustrates the principle that it is incumbent upon the recipient of God's great grace to be likewise gracious to his neighbor. It also warns against a spurious, deceitful regard for the grace of God (Matt. 18:21-35).
 - a. This parable is prompted by Peter's enquiry of Jesus as to how forgiving he ought to be toward a brother who frequently sins against him, vs. 21-22. His appreciation of grace is lacking, though the gospel will bring change (Acts 15:11; I Pet. 1:10, 13; 4:10; 5:12).
 - b. A slave, in fact a picture of a sinner before God, is in debt to his king for an extremely large amount of money. However, he does not ask for a cancellation of his indebtedness, but rather seeks for an extension of credit so as to pay back everything in full, vs. 23-26.
 - c. The king (God), at first demanding, yet is exceedingly gracious in that he cancels the debt in full, and so rejects the slave's request for extended credit. Why did he do this? Because he "felt compassion" for the slave, v. 27. Obviously there is no merit in the slave himself, though he must have responded with amazement.
 - d. This same slave who has received great grace, yet refuses to offer a little grace to a small debtor. He has not learned from his own experience. No extension of credit is allowed. Rather, immediate payment is harshly demanded; inability to pay brings severe imprisonment, vs. 28-30.
 - e. The king, on hearing of this lack of even modest grace, declares that the recipient of great grace should have been gracious. As a consequence this slave will be deprived of great grace. Thus the Savior warns that professing believers who lack grace will be treated as illegitimate, and disgraced, vs. 31-35.
3. Thus the objects of the grace of God should manifest grace towards believers and unbelievers. It ought to be a spontaneous response for the Christian. "While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
 - a. Paul admonishes: "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Col. 3:12-13; cf. Eph. 4:32).
 - b. Hence, although we may recommend the grace of God in our speaking, that is by means of our words, yet our manner should also communicate grace. "Let no

unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." (Eph. 4:29), and thus be "seasoned with grace" (Col. 4:6).

- c. Further, those who are rich in spiritual and material grace ought to be willing to share from their abundance. ¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share," (I Tim. 6:17-18; cf. John 13:34; Jas. 2:15-16; I John 3:16-18).
- d. By way of illustration, apprenticed London hairdresser, Robert Robinson, was shaken when he heard George Whitefield preach on, "the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7). After three years of spiritual darkness, he was converted and later became a pastor at Norwich. Only then could he write of the saved sinner's continual reliance upon grace.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
 Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
 Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
 Call for songs of loudest praise.
 Teach me some melodious sonnet,
 Sung by flaming tongues above;
 Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
 Mount of God's unchanging love.

O to grace how great a debtor
 Daily I'm constrained to be;
 Let that grace now, like a fetter,
 Bind my wand'ring heart to thee.
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
 Prone to leave the God I love;
 Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
 Seal it from Thy courts above