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Grace CL305

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III. THE RICHES OF DIVINE GRACE

As the thirty-three stupendous works of God which together comprise the salvation of a soul are now presented, the essential facts, already tabulated, respecting these vast realities should be borne in mind. They are wrought *or produced* by God; they are wrought *or produced* instantaneously; they are wrought *or brought forth* simultaneously; they are grounded on the merit of Christ; and, being grounded on the merit of Christ, are eternal.

It follows that each person of the human family at a given moment is either perfectly saved, being the recipient of every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, or perfectly lost, being without one of these spiritual blessings—in the estate of those who are condemned because of a sin nature, because of personal sins, because of an estate under sin, and because they are to such a degree under the power of Satan.

These thirty-three riches of grace are:

#1. In the Eternal Plan of God. To be in the eternal plan of God is a position of surpassing importance both with regard to the reality itself and its timeless character. The human mind cannot grasp what it means to be in the divine purpose from all eternity, nor what is indicated when it is declared that the same divine purpose extends into eternity to come—"whom he predestinated, he glorified."

Whatever may be required as intermediate steps between the predestination and the glory will be under the absolute control of God and wrought of God regardless of the human element that may of necessity enter into it. No human will was ever created to defeat the will of God, but rather the human will is one of the instruments by which God realizes His purposes for humanity. It has always been thus and must be so of necessity, since God is what He is.

The student who meditates on the Person of God, the eternity of God, the omnipotence of God, the sovereignty of God as Creator of, and Ruler over, all things, and the elective purpose of God, will be fortified against that form of rationalism—subtle in character and natural to the human heart—which imagines that, in His creation, God has unwittingly so tied His own hands that He cannot with that absoluteness which belongs to infinity realize His eternal purpose.

Five terms are employed in the New Testament to represent aspects of the truth respecting the sovereign purpose of God.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD *Biblical teaching that God possesses all power and is the ruler of all things (Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:34–35). God rules and works according to His eternal purpose, even through events that seem to contradict or oppose His rule.¹*

Foreknown. As difficult as it may be for a finite being to grasp the thought, it yet remains true that God foreknew from all eternity every step in the entire program of this universe to its minutest detail.

It is just what the term implies and no more—merely that God knows beforehand. Closely akin to foreknowledge is *foreordination* (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2, 20).

The doctrine of the divine foreknowledge is properly restricted, since it is outside the range of that in God which causes things to come to pass.

The concept of foreknowledge does, however, appear throughout the Bible in other ways. First, the all-inclusiveness of the knowledge of God is clearly taught. God's understanding is unlimited (Ps 147:5). He knows every heart and thought (1 Chr. 28:9). Psalm 139 provides an extended poetic description of God's knowledge of all human thoughts, words, and actions. This knowledge extends to the flight of a sparrow and the number of hairs on the head (Mt 10:29–30). From such limitless knowledge, it may be inferred that God also knows the future events of human history.

In addition, Scripture directly teaches that God is aware of events before they happen. This sets him apart from heathen idols, who lack the ability to foresee the future (Is 44:6–8; 45:21). It is God's foreknowledge that provides the basis for the predictions of the prophets. God announced to Adam and Eve that the seed of the woman would certainly defeat the serpent and his seed (Gn. 3:15). Promises of future blessing were given to Abraham (12:3). God said to Moses, "I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go" (Ex 3:19, RSV). The coming glory of the Messiah was declared by the OT prophets (see, e.g., Is 9:1–7; Jer. 23:5–6; Ez. 34:20–31; Hos. 3:4–5). In Daniel 7, God revealed the rise and fall of future world empires and the establishment of the kingdom of God (see also Dn. 2:31–45).²

Predestinated. As used in the New Testament, this great doctrinal word declares that God determines beforehand that which comes to pass.

Destination is determined.

In its New Testament use it refers only to that which God has predetermined for His elect. It should therefore not be used in reference to the non-elect and their destiny, though there can be no reasonable doubt but that, in ways beyond human understanding, the destiny of the non-elect is in the mind of God from all eternity.

The question of whether, in point of time, foreknowledge precedes predestination, or predestination precedes foreknowledge, is not only useless but wholly uncalled for. God could not predestinate what He did not foreknow. Nor could He foreknow as certain to come to pass that which He had not made certain by predestination.

Three passages are in evidence and in two of them foreknowledge stands first:

¹ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1523). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

² Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (493–494). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

1-“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29);

2-“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:2),

3-while, in the third, foreknowledge is second: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23).

The two ideas which these words represent must of necessity be stated in sequence; but there could be no sequence in their relation the one to the other. It is, therefore, God’s message to every believer that he has been both foreknown in predestination and predestinated through foreknowledge to the unending realization of all of God’s riches of grace.

Certain things that belong to such as may be saved are predestined (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:4–5, 9; 3:11; cf. Acts 4:28). Note the absence of all conditional features here. Predestination is more of persons than their actions, and not merely of persons as such but their destiny.

Predestination witnesses to divine certainty but not compulsion. There obviously are different ways of making things certain. It may be done by moral influence or by control of the human will. God chooses to accomplish His purpose by guiding and inclining human wills. This truth should prevent misrepresentations of predestination.

Two Greek words are translated predestinate: προορίζω (cf. the derivative horizon—‘that which lies beyond or before,’ also a word like provide; see Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29–30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11) and προγίνωσκω, ‘to know beforehand’ (Acts 2:23; 26:5; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2, 20; 2 Pet. 3:17).

Predestination is in harmony with all Scripture, decrees, election, covenants, and human experience. It is more than almightiness or resistless divine will. God weighs every moral feature of every problem. Predestination in consequence is always agreeable to the holy nature of God.

*Since predestination is never said to control the destiny of the unsaved, any suggestion that its provisions are for the unsaved must be resisted.*³

Elect of God. The term *elect*, as related to Christians, is distinctive in that it designates those who are predestinated, but with only an implication relative to destiny. *Emphasizing the who not so much the where they are going.*

They are the elect in the present age and will manifest the grace of God in future ages (1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1).

Chosen. Again an important aspect of truth is indicated by a specific word. The term *chosen*, when referring to that which God has worked in behalf of the saved, emphasizes the peculiar act of God which separates unto Himself His elect who are both foreknown and predestinated. The Christian bears the high distinction that he has been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

*ELECTION IS SEEN IN THE PARTICULAR ONE CHOSEN. Many damsels came out to draw water (Gen. 24:13), but only one is chosen, and that one is chosen with full respect to her own will in the matter (Gen. 24:5–8). There could be no failure in the securing of Rebekah as Isaac’s bride. The whole program of God for Israel is involved; yet her will is not coerced in the least and she is chosen precisely as divinely determined.*⁴

³ Chafer, L. S. (1993). *Vol. 7: Systematic theology* (255–256). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

⁴ Chafer, L. S. (1993). *Vol. 4: Systematic theology* (140). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Called. As far as New Testament terms have been traced, the words *predestination*, *elect*, and *chosen* are not used of those whom God has selected for salvation when still in their unregenerate state. The word *called*, however, may include in the breadth of its meaning those who, at a given time, are unregenerate but who in the divine purpose are to become regenerate.

The angels are not only ministering spirits sent in behalf of those who are now saved, but of them also who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). “Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

Reference in all this discussion is to an *effectual* call, such as is indicated in Romans 8:30, implying that God not only gives an invitation, but inclines the heart to glad acceptance of it. How great, then, is this characterizing work of such a distinctive position! and how immeasurable the opulence of the one who is included in the eternal purpose of God!

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

#2. Redeemed. Redemption, as a doctrine and as it obtains in the present age, is properly subject to a threefold classification:

(1) It is universal in character in the sense that it includes the whole world and provides a sufficient ground of righteousness upon which God may save those who are lost.

(2) It is specific when contemplated as the position into which the saved one has been brought. He is purchased out of the bond slave market and set free with that liberty which is the rightful portion of the sons of God (Gal. 5:1).

It is not a position to be sought or secured by faithfulness; it is that which God has wrought in behalf of every regenerate person.

The exercise of divine grace—even to the finality of justification—is said to be “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). It is in connection with redemption that the believer has “forgiveness of sins,” and this is “according to,” and a part of, “the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

(3) There is yet a redemption of the body of the believer and for that redemption the Christian is waiting (Rom. 8:23). The thought here, as in all the riches of grace, is that redemption is a position of transforming reality and is the possession of all who are saved.

The doctrine of redemption is set forth by the precise meaning of the original words: (1) λυτρόω, λύτρον, λύτρωσις. This word root in all three forms is used eight times and only of the one who received redemption (cf. Luke 1:68—“redeemed his people”). (2) Πγοράζω, used thirty-one times, meaning to be in the ‘agora’ or place of assembly and market, hence to buy for one’s self by a price freely paid (cf. Rev. 5:9—“... hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”). (3) Πξαγοράζω, used four times, meaning to purchase out of the market not to return (cf. Gal. 3:13—“redeemed us from the curse of the law”). (4) Ππολύτρωσις, used eight times, meaning a full deliverance of the soul from sin and of the body from the grave (Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14).⁵

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

⁵ Chafer, L. S. (1993). *Vol. 7: Systematic theology* (263). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

#3. Reconciled. Again, a special reconciliation is in view, one which reaches far beyond that aspect of it which contemplates the whole world. It is the reconciliation of the believer to God as presented in 2 Corinthians 5:20. A difference will be recognized between the reconciliation of the world—as declared in 5:19—and the reconciliation of the individual—as declared in 5:20–21.

The reconciliation of the world does not obviate *or prevent from happening* the reconciliation of the individual. The latter is that form of reconciliation which is applied to the believer's heart and results in a perfect and unending peace between God and the reconciled believer.

To be perfectly reconciled to God on the ground of the merit of Christ, as is true of every child of God, is a position of blessedness indeed and is one of the riches of divine grace.

The chief Greek words concerned with reconciliation are: καταλλαγή (Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18–19), καταλλάσσω (Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18–20), and Πλάσκομαι (Heb. 2:17). Reconciliation means that someone or something is thoroughly changed and adjusted to something which is a standard, as a watch may be adjusted to a chronometer. The doctrine may be considered in as many as three aspects:

1. OLD TESTAMENT USE. *In the Old Testament reconciliation speaks of atonement or a covering for sin (Lev. 8:15).*

2. OF THE WHOLE WORLD TO GOD (2 Cor. 5:19). *The need of this adjustment is expressed in Romans 5:6–11, where the doctrine with its universal scope appears. Note four expressions in use there: ungodly, without strength, sinners, enemies.*

By the death of Christ on its behalf, the whole world is thoroughly changed in its relation to God. But God is never said to be reconciled to man. The world is so altered in its position respecting the holy judgments of God through the cross of Christ that God is not now imputing their sin unto them. The world is thus rendered savable.

3. OF EACH INDIVIDUAL (2 Cor. 5:20). *Distinguish three changes connected with reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:17–20: (a) that which is positional or structural, wherein a soul is seen to be in Christ (vs. 17), (b) that of a general relationship, or the basis on which salvation may be offered to all mankind (vs. 19), and (c) that which is a mental attitude or the trust of the individual heart when one sees and accepts the value in the death of Christ for him (vs. 20). Consider likewise the passages: Matthew 5:24; 1 Corinthians 7:11; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:21.*

Since the position of the world before God is completely changed through the death of Christ, God's own attitude toward man cannot longer be the same. He is prepared to deal with souls now in the light of what Christ has accomplished. This seems to be a change in God, of course, but it is not a reconciliation. God, on the contrary, believes completely in the thing which Christ has done and accepts it, so as to continue being just, although able thereby to justify any sinner who accepts the Savior as his reconciliation.

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

#4. Related to God Through Propitiation. The central truth contained in this doctrine—and more engaging than any other aspect of it—is the abiding fact that God *is* propitious. He has been rendered free toward sinners by the death of His Son for them. That which constitutes the divine problem in the salvation of sinners, namely, the solution of the problem of sin, has been solved perfectly.

In the case of the unsaved, that which remains is the human responsibility of saving faith. The truth that all that enters into the divine responsibility has been perfectly wrought indicates that God is propitious

toward sinners; but He is also propitious toward His blood-bought child who has sinned, which sin Christ bore on the cross.

The truth is of greatest import that “He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). The ever recurring need of adjustment between the Christian and his Father is possible on the ground of the truth that the Father is propitious. To be in that relation to God in which He is propitious toward the specific sins of the child of God is a benefit of infinite grace. It is a position more advantageous than heart or mind can comprehend.

Other verses to consider: Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17, 1 Jn. 4:10

The Greek words employed in the doctrine of propitiation are: Πλασμός, signifying that which Christ became for the sinner (1 John 2:2; 4:10), Πλαστήριον, the place of propitiation (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5), Πλεως (Matt. 16:22; Heb. 8:12), and Πλάσκομαι (Luke 18:13; Heb. 2:17).

Ἰλάσκομαι indicates that God has become gracious, reconciled. In profane Greek the word means “to render propitious by prayer and sacrifice.” But from the Biblical standpoint God is not of Himself alienated from man. His sentiment does not, therefore, need to be changed. Still, in order that He may not for righteousness’ sake be necessitated to comport Himself otherwise, an infinite expiation is necessary, which to be sure He Himself in His love institutes and gives. Man, all exposed to wrath, could neither venture nor find an expiation. But then God, in finding it, anticipates and meets the demands of His own righteousness. Nothing happens to change God, as in the heathen view. Therefore it is never read that God must be reconciled. Rather something happens to man, who now escapes the wrath to come. A call for mere mercy would require use of the cry Ἐλέησον. When guilt and its punishment need to be acknowledged, however, the word Πλάσκομαι is used (Luke 18:13; Heb. 2:17).

Christ became the Propitiator and thus the Father is propitiated. The terminology in Hebrews 9:5 for mercy seat corresponds to the LXX translation of the word, namely, Πλαστήριον.⁶

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

⁶ Chafer, L. S. (1993). *Vol. 7: Systematic theology* (258). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.