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C0527 – 7/20/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Grace: God's Solution

Why are we looking at the Terms of Salvation? I told you we're doing this because there is a lot of confusion in evangelicalism right now over the question "what must a person do to be saved?" I believe that if you are fighting a battle then you at least have to know where the battlefield is and get involved in the battle. The battle today is raging over this simple question.

We need to fine tune our understanding of the Terms of Salvation in an age in America where the American mind is closed. Whenever you have this happen you have confusion result. Lack of discernment creeps in so that people are no longer able to think critically and make distinctions. Postmodernism hasn't helped either because it says that "language is just a social construct and can be manipulated to deceive others and increase one's power." With postmodernism, I define my own terms the way I want to and I don't tell you about it so that you think I said X when I actually meant Y. For example, Bill Clinton was asked, "Were you alone with Monica Lewinsky in the White House?" Anyone remember his answer? He said "no, I was not alone with her". What's the key word that Bill Clinton defined a different way in order to deceive and retain power? The key word is "alone". The word "alone" in the question clearly meant "where no one else could see you". His answer uses a definition of "alone" which meant, "no, we were never alone, there were some janitor's 200 rooms away from us!" So, he displayed postmodernism very well and these are language games designed to manipulate others and they go on all the time. Theologically, the language game has become a problem so that if you are not real discerning you can get fooled by this trick. For example, is a person saved by "grace"? Yes people will say. But what do they mean by "grace"? They may mean grace mediated through the sacraments. Or "grace" which is what enables a person to merit the merit of Christ. It's all in how you define your terms. Do you believe in the resurrection. Yes, Christ died and rose on the third day? What do you mean by resurrection? Do you mean that He bodily, materially rose from the grave on the third day? Oh no, He rose

spiritually. Jesus is an eternal spirit and He returned to the spirit world. See what I mean. Today you can't assume that people mean the same thing by the same words. We have to be very careful to define the Terms of Salvation from Scripture and not from our theology or preconceived notions. Even context has been ignored by the media so that a statement, when ripped from one context can be placed in another which gives a different meaning. That's what we mean by postmodernism claiming language is a social construct and can be used to manipulate others in order to increase one's power. God was not a postmodernist and Christians should fight against it. God created language and it is sinful to change the rules of language to promote human agendas. Words have definite meaning because God created the rules of language and their ultimate context. What would happen if God said, "Let there be light" and something appeared and God said, "no, that's not what I meant, I meant this". It's absurd. God's always spoke language and then He created creature language so that He could communicate to us propositionally. And that's what we have in the Bible, God's propositional revelation concerning Himself and His creation. Language is therefore a tool that is to be used responsibly by mankind. And we have to evaluate the Terms of Salvation from their context and historical lexicons in use when the books of the Bible were written. Otherwise we get all confused and we read into the Bible what we think it ought to say.

The first lesson in this series majored on Depravity: Man's Predicament. You can never understand God's solution: Grace, until you first properly understand Man's Predicament. These two are inseparable for a proper understanding. This is why C. I. Scofield said of the Book of Romans, "grace does not enter, cannot enter, until the whole race without one single exception stands guilty and speechless before God." Thus, last time we looked at Depravity: Man's Predicament and I painted you a pretty dark picture of man's depravity.

First, I told you that God created all things and it was good. Second, I taught you that Eve lifted her autonomous reasoning above God's revelation causing the Fall and ruination of all. Third, I taught you that there were at least three immediate results of the Fall;

1. loss of fellowship
2. loss of spiritual life
3. loss of physical life

Fourth, I taught you three corresponding aspects of sin.

1. Personal sin is what causes loss of fellowship.
2. Inherited sin is what causes loss of spiritual life.

3. Imputed sin is what causes loss of physical life.

You could sum up our condition by saying “you’re not just a sinner, you are sin! You are the problem.” I hope you realize that there is no way for a person to avoid being condemned by God. There is absolutely nothing a person in this condition can do to gain salvation. If you don’t feel the weight of your sinful condition then you haven’t come to grips with the holiness of God. When John saw the Glorified Son of Man in Rev 1 what was his response? He fell as a dead man. When Isaiah saw the Lord lofty and exalted in Isa 6 what was his response? He said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." If you do not see you are a sinner by position and experience then you have not grasped, even in part, the holiness of God. It is for this reason that grace must enter if there is to be any hope for anyone.

A. GRACE DEFINED

The Greek noun is *charis* and is used 155 times in the NT. It is used 164 times in the LXX, 79 times in the canonical books and is translated 61 times from the Hebrew word *chen* which means “grace” or “favor” (e.g. Gen 6:8). In the NT this word has two senses depending on the context.

1. “God’s unmerited or undeserved favor in providing salvation for sinners through Christ’s sacrificial death (e.g. Eph 2:8).
2. Providing enablement for the believer (Eph 4:7, 29; 1 Cor 15:10; Acts 20:32).

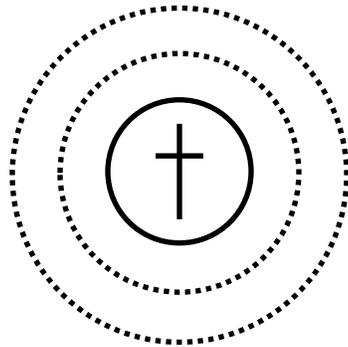
B. SOURCE OF GRACE

In a broad sense, all grace comes from God. In the narrow sense, all grace comes through the one Man, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4).

Romans 5:15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

But the necessary basis upon which grace comes is the cross work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, all grace, no matter the degree or secondary persons through which it comes, is ultimately sourced in God so that God will be glorified, which is, of course, God's ultimate purpose.



C. DEGREES OF GRACE

Now, the Bible clearly teaches that grace comes in different degrees. Paul says, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7). Peter says, “may grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Pt 1:2). So, grace comes in various degrees or measures and that degree is determined by God Himself and is not based on anything in man. For Christ knew what was in man, total depravity (John 2:25). To understand the grace of God in its various degrees theologians have divided grace into two aspects; 1) common grace and 2) effective grace. The sharp difference between common grace and effective grace is that effective grace infallibly results in salvation while common grace does not. The diagram above shows this sharp distinction by separating the inner circle from the outer circles. All the saved are within the inner circle and have experienced God’s effective grace. All on the outside of that circle experience varying degrees of common grace based on the cross work of Jesus Christ, but they are not saved.

D. COMMON GRACE

Common grace, although it may differ in measure to different peoples in different places, is based in the cross of Christ. Common grace may be defined as “the influence of the Spirit on the whole of mankind in making basic provisions for all men, in restraining sin, and in revealing the gospel.”

Basic Provisions for All Men. Romans 1 and Acts 17 outline various general provisions that

1. knowledge of the existence and nature of God through creation (Rom 1:20)
2. knowledge of the existence and nature of God through conscience (Rom 2:14-15)
3. life (Acts 17:25)
4. breath (Acts 17:25)
5. all things (Acts 17:25)
6. consolidation in Adam so that all men could be consolidated in Christ (Acts 17:26)
7. time when you live in history (Acts 17:26)
8. where you live on earth (Acts 17:26)

In Restraining Sin. The operation of the Spirit in the world both before and particularly after Pentecost has always been involved in restraining sin. In the OT, a key text is Gen 6:3 where God said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh;” There was a clear operation of the Spirit in retarding the effects of sin. This can only be by the grace of God. The operation of the Spirit in restraining sin during the present dispensation of the church is explicitly mentioned in 2 Thess 2:7 “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.” The context is concerning the day of the Lord (Tribulation) and the revealing of the lawless one, the antichrist. The revelation of who the antichrist is cannot take place until the restrainer is removed. Who or what is the restrainer? Most agree that the one who now restrains is the same one who restrained in the OT, the Holy Spirit. Other’s disagree and say the restrainer is the church or human government. However, I think Thiessen was right when he said in 1935, “while human governments may be agencies in the restraining work of the Spirit, we believe that they in turn are influenced by the Church. And again, back of human government is God Who instituted it (Gen. 9:5, 6; Rom 13:1-7) and controls it (Ps. 75:5-7). So it is God by His Spirit that restrains the development of lawlessness.”¹ I think it is best to simply say that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate restrainer of sin in the world and that He uses various means to retard the effects of sin. Once He is removed and the day of the Lord begins the world will feel the full effects of sin running its course. The unrestrained effects of sin will be unleashed and the world will hunger once more for His restraining presence. It will be obvious, in that day, that were it not for God’s common grace of restraining sin and sin was allowed to run its course that the world would have been destroyed thousands of years ago. Nevertheless, this degree of grace administered by the Holy Spirit upon the whole world is not enough to infallibly result in salvation. Something more is needed

In Revealing the Gospel. An operation of the Holy Spirit unique to this dispensation is the operation of the 3-fold convicting ministry of the Spirit outlined in John 16:7-11. This ministry, following the cross of Christ and the ascension of Christ certainly falls under the grace of God.

John 16:7-11 ⁷ "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;

¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

This ministry of the Holy Spirit clearly involves the word of God and is required before a person can believe in Christ. Paul raises the question, "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" (Rom 10:14) and concludes that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). It also involves the preacher or the evangelist who takes the message of God's word to a lost world. Paul asks, "how will they hear if there is no preacher?" So, this ministry of the Holy Spirit involves the preaching of God's word. However, even though the word of God must be preached and heard, this, of course, does not guarantee that a person will be saved. The message itself must include these three facts: the fact of sin, that the one thing that separates men from God is belief in Christ; the fact of righteousness, because the righteous one ascended to the Father showing that the standard one must meet to be with the Father is the righteousness of Christ and this righteousness must be imputed to your account by believing in Christ in order to go to heaven; finally, the fact of judgment because the ruler of this world, who is Satan, has been judged at the cross. Therefore all who remain on his side are ultimately doomed to the same fate. These three facts must be laid bare before a person's eyes. Many a person has had these facts laid bare before his eyes and many have been convicted while others it did not convict. The facts can be laid bare by the preacher but the use of those facts upon a given person differs because of the individual work of the Holy Spirit on a person. It is not uncommon to have three unbelievers all hear the same message and yet have three different responses. One feels no conviction at all. Another has conviction but does not believe. A third has such extreme conviction that it vexes his soul yet he does not believe for fear of what his wife or others will think of his decision. Thus he leaves the service having never been convicted to the point of belief. What this grace ministry of the Spirit does is make these individuals highly responsible

for their unbelief. They know exactly what they ought to do but they still refuse to do it for fear of having to give up some vice. All this ministry does is lay the facts bare before their eyes so that they see they have a decision to make. What this ministry alone has not done and does not do is guarantee an infallible coming to salvation in Christ. It simply places the necessary facts one must believe before their eyes. A guarantee of salvation requires the ministry of effective grace, which is of great importance, and which we are to treat in a moment.

So, summing up, common grace is “the influence of the Spirit on the whole of mankind in making general provisions for all men, in restraining sin, and in revealing the gospel.” It comes in different degrees. For example, all men know about the existence of God and enjoy life and breath but not all are privileged to hear the specifics of the gospel message. These works of the Spirit are necessary and must precede salvation for in the revealing of the gospel is included necessary content that a person must have placed before him in order to be saved. But, it is crucial to understand that common grace does not guarantee that a person will come to Christ. When a person does come to Christ it is evidence of effective grace which guarantees a person's will was made willing to trust Christ as Savior.

The Arminian Notion of Common Grace. Finally, the Arminian notion of common grace (aka sufficient grace) extends even to the reversal of the effects of sin inherited from Adam's Fall. It is important to realize that while God does do all of the above for people He does NOT do what Arminian's claim God does.

Arminian theology teaches

1. man originally had the ability to sin or not to sin
2. because of the Fall all men inherit a corrupted nature (not a sin nature but corrupted so that men simply have a tendency to sin)
3. God responded with prevenient grace through the cross of Jesus Christ
4. Prevenient grace reverses the effects of our inherited corrupt nature
5. Thus restoring to all men the ability to cooperate with God and respond to Him in salvation by an act of their own free will.

I should note that Arminianism does not believe in the imputation of sin (direct from Adam to you) as per Rom 5:12. In this view, of course, it logically means that if a man can cooperate with God's prevenient grace and be saved that he can later turn from that grace and lose his salvation.ⁱⁱ

All this to say that there is common grace but it does not extend to reversing the effects of the fall. This theory heightens man's ability and results in a salvation attained by God and man cooperating. Thus, in this view, God does not get all the glory and therefore this destroys salvation as a gift of God's grace. The Bible does teach that the offer of salvation is to any and all men but that does not mean that any and all men have the *ability* to believe. This could only be so if the effects of our inherited nature were reversed by the cross of Christ. But the Bible does not teach that to be the case.

The Bible teaches that man is so depraved because of imputed, inherited, and personal sin that he will not ever choose God unless God initiates with the individual. This is not an indiscriminate work like common grace but what is known as...

E. EFFECTIVE GRACE

Effective grace is a work of the Holy Spirit in influencing men to the degree required for an individual to certainly believe in Christ. All who have received this work of the Holy Spirit have believed in Christ and no one who receives this work of the Holy Spirit has not been saved. It therefore guarantees salvation for the person who receives this ministry of the Spirit. It is required because of man's condition under imputed, inherited, and personal sin. Men have no desire or ability to come to Christ without both common and effective grace administered by the Spirit of God. The measure of effective grace necessary for a person to believe in Christ differs from individual to individual because each of us, in our finer details, has a different constitution (intellect, noetic affects of sin, sin patterns, etc...). The preaching of sin, righteousness, and judgment may be all that a person requires to cross the barrier of unbelief but for others it might take more convincing, more persuasion. This should not be a surprise.

Again, this grace is also only available because of the cross of Christ and it gives a person the willingness and ability to come to Christ and be saved. Why do we need this grace? Because no one is willing to come to Christ apart from God's sovereign operation of enabling them to be willing. That this is the clear teaching of Scripture should be without question.

John 6:44 "No one can (*dunamis*) come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws (*helko*) him;

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me,

John 6:65-69 For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." ⁶⁶ As a result of this many of His

disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

Also, turn over to

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

If he cannot accept or understand the things of God then how is he ever going to get saved unless he is enabled to understand and believe the gospel? And the only one who can enable him to understand and ultimately believe the gospel is by the work of the Spirit of God. Now back up to

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What's the difference between those who think Christ crucified is foolishness and those who think Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God? The difference is one act of God mentioned in verse 24. The doctrine of effective "calling" (*kletos*). It doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or Greek, if you've been called then the whole cross work takes on a new character for you. The difference is whether a person has been called or not, and God is the one who does the calling. Thus, effective grace is closely related to the effective "call" of God to salvation. It certainly results in salvation. Now, it is true that there are two aspects of God's doctrine of calling.

General Call. There are a few scriptures which speak of a general call that was rejected. Matt 22:14, "Many are called but few are chosen." There is a general call to salvation given to all who hear the gospel. While hearing the gospel is a pre-requisite to believing the gospel (Rom 10:14, 17) it does not guarantee that it will be believed. Thus, a second type of "call" that guarantee's salvation is taught in scripture.

Effective Call. Chafer said of the effective call, “This feature of divine activity is similar to drawing. No Scripture defines the divine call, with all that it means in its effectiveness, better than Romans 8:30.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Romans 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

All whom He foreknew are the same group who He predestined and are the same group He called and the same group He justified and the same group He glorified. There is no step in this sequence where a person can get off. This is the effective call for all who are “called”, Paul says, are also “justified” and the one who does all these acts is God. He foreknew them, He predestined them, He called them, He justified them, and He glorified them. That there is an effectual call is taught by many other passages which we do not have the time to look into (e.g. Acts 2:39; Rom. 8:28, 30; 9:24-26; 1 Cor. 1:9, 24, 26; 7:18, 20, 22, 24; Gal. 1:6, 15; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1; 9:15; 11:8; Jas. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 17:14)

Opponents to this doctrine might suggest that if this grace of God certainly results in salvation then God is forcing or coercing someone to come against his own will. That is not the idea of effective grace. Effective grace never made a single person do something contrary to his will. Rather, it makes the individual willing to come. Were it not for this work of God’s grace no one would ever come because of the depraved nature of man.

At the same time it must be emphasized that this does not erase the responsibility of man to believe. I know you have many questions in your head now because of the implications of this teaching for the areas of election, predestination, extent of the atonement and human responsibility. But that it is the clear teaching of Scripture is beyond question. Whether you can accept it or not is a matter of the Father’s enabling you to receive it. It may not fit with your theology but ultimately this work of God is inscrutable (i.e. it cannot be peered into any further than revelation permits) but it must be accepted by all who pay homage to the one who has revealed so much as He, in His wisdom has determined.

F. CONCLUSION

This evening we have built on the foundation established last week of Depravity: Man's Predicament by looking at Grace: God's Solution. We defined grace in two ways depending on the context as...

1. "God's unmerited or undeserved favor in providing salvation for sinners through Christ's sacrificial death (e.g. Eph 2:8).
2. Providing enablement for believers (Eph 4:7, 29; 1 Cor 15:10; Acts 20:32).

We found that all grace, no matter the degree or means through which it comes ultimately comes from God and through His Son Jesus Christ. This grace of God has two aspects is abundantly clear from Scripture. First, there is common grace which is defined as "the influence of the Spirit on the whole of mankind in making basic provisions for all men, in restraining sin, and in revealing the gospel." Second, there is effective grace which is defined as "a work of the Holy Spirit in influencing men to the degree required for an individual to certainly believe in Christ." Coupled with common and effective grace are the common and effective calls to salvation. There is a general call which is to all who hear the gospel. None would believe if this is all the work God did. Those who believe only believe because of the effective call of the Spirit which is similar to the drawing ministry of the Father. Yet this does not erase the human condition of salvation which is our subject of interest next time.

ⁱ Henry C Thiessen, "Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 92:301, July-Sept, 1935.

ⁱⁱ The passage used to support this theory is John 1:9 "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." Arminius taught that the true Light was reason and conscience as mediated by the Holy Spirit which enabled anyone to believe and be saved. But this verse speaks only of the light of nature which Christ created (v 10) and through which all men have some knowledge of God. This verse certainly does not speak of a special grace that removes the effects of our inherited corrupt nature.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chafer, L. S., *Systematic Theology: Volume III* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), 168.

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