

**“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 31 – Sola Gratia – “Common Grace and Christ’s Tears”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

**Read John 1: 1-9** – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God.” “He was in the beginning with God.” “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” “There was a man whose name was John.” “This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.” “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.” “That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” These verses I believe are talking about Common Grace, which is the light of Christ shining upon all men whom God the Father deigns it should shine. The purpose? That all through Him might believe.

Last Sunday I had you look at Titus Chapter 2, verse 11 with me in terms of this subject: “For the grace of God has appeared to all men.” And I told you that in terms of the definiteness of this appearing, it had not appeared to many people either before or during the time of Christ’s ministry, but that we should understand this in terms of God’s heart toward all mankind in general. The general appearing to all men came in Christ’s Incarnation; the personification of the good-will of God toward all mankind. Then, when the gospel of what Christ has done for sinners, in righteousness and sacrifice, is preached, according to the decretive will of God in election, there is a special, specific, and personal appearing of the grace of God in salvation for all those who will believe, in their hearts in giving them regeneration. Let me repeat: This revealing of Christ to the heart of an undeserving sinner is all of sovereign, special, and particular grace being given to them according to the decretive will of God in Election. But common grace is related to Christ’s general shining in the darkness of this fallen world; of God’s showing a general kindness and compassion to all men through the gift of His Son. This shining of light and good-will and kindness to all men incorporates His giving both natural and spiritual gifts of grace to men which they in turn show to others around them. All of God’s kindness and all of His goodness are designed to lead men to repentance and faith in Christ. The giving and showing forth of His common grace is just as much a part of His design in and through the gift of His Son, as is His special and particular grace.

**Let me read to you from Alexander Maclaren’s sermon on “The Teaching of Grace” from Titus 2: 11**

“Grace (that is the grace which is found in God and Christ) is a self-motived love that is in full energetic exercise. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting love that delights to impart. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting, communicating love which bends in tenderness over and floods with gifts those that stand far beneath itself. Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, and stooping love which brings in its hands the gift of forgiveness, and deals with those on whom it lavishes this tenderness, not according to their merits, but according to the pulsations of its own heart. And thus grace is the shorthand word for the self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, stooping, and pardoning mercy which has its very home and throne in the heart of God Himself. It is this galaxy of stars blended into one diffused light, and yet capable of being resolved into so many suns, which the Apostle here says ‘hath appeared.’ He uses a most significant and picturesque word, for it is the expression which is proper to describe the raying out in the heavens of its great lights, and is the only place in Scripture in which it is applied to physical

things is in reference to the sun and stars which, clouded by tempest, for many days did not 'appear,' nor could beam their sweet light on the darkened earth. In all other cases where the word is employed it has a definite and plain meaning. It always refers to the coming of Jesus Christ, either his first coming in the Incarnation, or his second coming to Judgment. That manifestation is the raying out, as it were, of a sun, which has been obscured by the mists of sin, rising from the un-drained swamps of our own hearts, and it pours itself down upon the mists; and thins them away until its radiant light is spread over all the glittering and rejoicing earth.

So the Apostle has a definite meaning, and points to a definite historical fact, when he declares that, in the Person and life of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, all this self-originated, active, communicating stooping, pardoning love finds its highest manifestation. The fire-mist, if I might so say, which was diffused through a chaotic universe, is gathered together into a sun, and it blazes down upon the world." (end of quote) But as beautiful and good as this is, we need to understand that common grace alone is not enough to save any person from their sins.

**Now Read Luke 13: 34 –**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her!" "How often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" "See!" "Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

**Read Luke 19 : 41 –** "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!' "But now they are hidden from your eyes." "But now they are hidden from your eyes." "For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

We need to see here that the Lord Jesus is weeping over a city, composed for the most part, of the non-elect; those whom He knew that God did not choose in election. Why? Because He, as the God-Man had a sincere desire that they would have recognized the day of their visitation. This is the desire of Common Grace, that even the most resistant, and even the most hardened would receive it.