

Salvation is All of Grace - The 'Doctrines of Grace' in Ephesians

Sovereign Electing Grace (Ephesians 1:3-6) - God chose people He would save before the foundation of the world, lovingly predestining their adoption into His family in Christ and making them holy and blameless before Him (v. 4-5a). Their salvation is ultimately a result of God's will and choice rather than man's (v. 5b), and this staggering truth should cause us to bless God (v. 3) and give Him all of the credit and glory and praise if we are saved (v. 6), because it is all of God. Because the God who predestines us also works all things, big and small, after the counsel of His sovereign will (v. 11), He is able to ensure the ends and means and all necessary details to ensure salvation to (*see "Preserving Grace" below*). Man is responsible to hope, trust, and believe in Christ and must do this to be saved (v. 12-13), yet God gets all the glory even for this (v. 12, 14).

Our Need for Grace (Eph. 2:1-3) – Our sinful nature (sometimes called radical corruption or radical / total depravity or spiritual inability) corrupts not just our actions (2:2), but our thoughts, desires, and will (2:3). We are all spiritually dead, lifeless, and unresponsive to spiritual things (2:1), in need of regeneration / resurrection (note parallel in 1:20-21 and 2:5-6). The world and Satan greatly influence us (2:2), but we are ultimately responsible because of our willful, hard-hearted and stubborn sin that blinds us (4:18). The Scriptures teach man cannot do anything to save himself, please God, or change his depraved condition and nature apart from sovereign grace, and left to himself, doesn't truly want to [Jer. 13:23, 17:9; John 3:19-20, Rom. 3:9-11, 8:7-8, 1 Cor. 2:14]

Effectual Grace (Eph. 2:4-9) – A work accomplished by God alone even *while* we were still spiritually dead (v. 4-5) and utterly hopeless (v. 12). This is God-given regenerating, resurrecting, life-giving grace (v. 5), by the same sovereign power that raised Christ from physical death (compare v. 5-6 to 1:20-21). God invincibly overcomes our sinful nature (v. 1-3) and replaces it, giving us faith, grace, and salvation as a gift (v. 8) not because of anything we had done or would do (v. 9a). God's purpose is to humble man (v. 9b) and to magnify His amazing grace (v. 7). Man is responsible to exercise faith, but even that he cannot take credit for – 100% of the credit and glory is God's (v. 8-9). This sovereign grace is sometimes deemed "irresistible" - God calls and draws elect sinners to faith effectually so that the one who once resisted now finds Christ *irresistible*, and the formerly depraved and unwilling sinner is now *willing to believe*, and able to obey (v. 10)

Particular Redemptive Grace (Eph. 1:7, 5:2, 5:25) – The elect are redeemed and forgiven by the truly powerful blood of Christ and riches of God's grace (1:7); an actual redemption rather than a merely potential one. Christ's sacrifice is not limited in its value, but the *intent* of redemption is particularly for God's children (5:2), truly redeeming and sanctifying the church His bride (5:25-27), rather than merely making salvation possible. Redemption is not universal, it's particular; '*redeem*' is limited to Christians in scripture

Preserving Grace (Eph. 1:13-14) – Those whom God saves by grace through faith are guaranteed their inheritance and cannot lose their salvation. They are responsible to continue in good works (2:10), and true saints (1:1) will persevere because they are *preserved by God* (1:13). All of salvation is of God, and for His glory (v. 6, 12, 14).

Sovereign Election – Salvation is by God’s Will, Work, Choosing, and Calling

Biblical Testimony:

- It’s hard to find a book in the N.T. that you can get past its first page (much less first few verses) without encountering this language; this was no minor doctrine or hidden by scripture writers: Acts 1:2, 2:39; Rom. 1:1, 5-6; 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 23-31; 2 Cor. 1:1a, 21; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; Phil. 1:6, 29; Col. 1:1, 29; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:9-10, 2:24-25; Titus 1:1; Heb. 2:10, 3:1; Jas. 1:18, 2:5; 1 Pet 1:1, 3, 15; 2 Pet 1:3, 10; 2 Jn 1:1, 13; Jude 1:1, 24; Rev. 1:5-6
- Consider just 3 consecutive books of different types (gospel, church history, epistle):
 - o **John** 1:13, 6:37-40, 44, 63, 65, 10:26-29, 15:5, 16, 19, 17:6-9, 17:25-26
 - o **Acts** 2:39, 47, 5:31, 11:18, 13:48, 16:14, 9:1-15, etc.
 - o **Romans** 8:28, 29, 30, 32, 38-39, 9:11, 14-16, etc.
- Virtually every book and writer of the Bible, including the O.T. minor prophets, teaches in some way God’s absolute sovereignty and the doctrines of grace.¹
- Man’s responsibility is also unmistakably taught, in many of the same passages above (John 1:12, 6:35, 47, 10:9, Acts 2:21, 38, 13:38-40, 6:31; Rom. 10:1, 9-17, 12:1ff) and in all scripture (Josh. 24:15, Deut. 30:19, Mt. 23:37, etc.)
- God’s sovereignty over man’s wills, affairs, and world is equally unmistakable in scripture (Gen 50:20, Job 1:21, 2:10, 42:2, Ps 115:3, 135:6, Prov. 16:4, 9, 33, 19:21, 20:24, 21:1, Isa. 14:24, 27, 46:9-11, Dan. 4:35, etc.)
- Man’s responsibility and God’s ultimate sovereignty in salvation are emphasized:
 - o By Jesus (Mt. 11:28 vs. John 6:44, 65 vs. Rev. 22:17)
 - o By Paul (Rom. 10:9 vs. 1 Cor. 12:3)
 - o By Peter (Acts 2:23 vs. 2:39, 3:19 vs. 5:31 & 11:17-18)
 - o Both are presented in the same verse (Acts 2:23, 4:28, etc.)
 - o Both are presented in salvation (Phil. 2:12-13, 1 Cor. 15:10, etc.)
 - o *Both are true!* What God joins together, we dare not separate.

Biblical Words:

- ‘Chose’ - Select groups / individuals out from a bigger group (Ps. 78:67-70, Jn. 15:19)
- Jesus told His disciples “You did not choose me, but *I chose you*” (Jn. 15:16)
 - Not all are chosen - Mt 22:14 “many are called [invited] but *few are chosen*”
 - The word is used of specific individuals chosen (Lk. 6:13, Acts 15:22, 40)
 - God’s elect are chosen (Mk. 13:20) unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13).
 - In the middle voice in Greek, it emphasizes God *Himself* choosing (Eph. 1:4), in other words “by Himself and for Himself”
- ‘Elect’ - *Chosen one(s)* - Mt. 24:22, 31, Lk 18:7, Rom. 8:33, Rev. 17:14, etc.
- ‘Called’ - A saving summons by God (Rom. 8:30, 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 1:9)
- ‘Predestined’ – God’s prior plan of salvation and adoption (Eph. 1:5, 11, Rom. 8:29-30)

For Further Reading: “Election” by C. H. Spurgeon (<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0041.htm>)
Sinners in the Hands of a Good God, by David Clotfelter (especially chapters 4-6)
Chosen by God, by R. C. Sproul; *Doctrines of Grace*, by James M. Boice & P. Ryken

¹ For a summary of the “doctrines of grace,” see reverse of this sheet. Steve Lawson goes through every book of the Bible in order, showing how each writer taught these truths in *Foundations of Grace*, Vol. 1.