

Salvation by Grace

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The main purpose of God in salvation is to demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace in the ages to come.

Scripture: John 3:16, Romans 5:20, Galatians 1:8, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 2:13

Topics: "Saving Grace", "Sovereign Election"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer preaches about the all-encompassing power and resources of God in the salvation of souls, surpassing even the creation of the universe. He delves into the four aspects of God's saving grace: the divine motives in grace, the principles incompatible with grace, the gracious work of God for humanity, and the sovereignty of saving grace. Chafer emphasizes that salvation is solely the work of God, from the finished work of Christ to the final presenting work of God, with no room for human merit, obligation, or guilt. He stresses the importance of preaching the pure gospel of grace to all, allowing for the sovereign selection and election according to God's infinite goodness.

Transcript

Scripture discloses the fact that the power and resources of God are more taxed by all that enters into the salvation of the soul than His power and resources were taxed in the creation of the material universe. In salvation God has wrought to the extreme limit of His might. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. He could do no more.

Four aspects of His saving grace are now to be examined: (1) Three divine motives in grace, (2) Three principles which cannot coexist with grace, (3) The gracious work of God for humanity, and (4) Saving grace is sovereign grace.

I. Three Divine Motives in Grace

In the Bible, three motives are assigned to God for the salvation of sinners. These motives are to be considered in what seems to be the order of their importance, beginning with that which seems to be the least and moving on to that which seems to be the greatest.

A. People Are Said to Be Saved That "Good Works" May Result

A statement of this truth is found in Ephesians 2:10:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Few portions of the Scriptures present more of the essentials of salvation than this passage. It should be considered in its various revelations:

"We are his workmanship"

Whatever enters into the transformation of the individual at the time he is saved is wholly a work of God for man. It is in no wise related to any work which man might do for God. According to the Scriptures, God alone can save, and God alone can keep. All that will have been done when God's saving work is completed will be seen to be "his workmanship."

"Created in Christ Jesus"

The divine work in behalf of a saved person is nothing less than a new creation. He has passed through the creative hand of God a second time and has become a new creature. The result is a new birth--a regeneration by the Spirit. This new creation is organically related to Christ as a branch is in the vine, and as a member is in the human body. So the believer is in Christ. He is "created in Christ Jesus."

"Unto good works"

Never is the sinner created in Christ Jesus by good works. The divine purpose is here revealed. Good works are possible only to those who are "created in Christ Jesus." This truth is twice stated in the epistle to Titus: "Who gave himself for us, that he, might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"; "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 2:14; 3:8).

So, also, this is the order of truth in the great doctrinal epistles. The work of God for man is first stated. After this, and growing out of this, is a new obligation which is the appeal for the faithful work of man for God.

It is the reasonable demand for a life corresponding to the transformation which God hath already wrought in the believer through His saving grace.

"Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"

This phrase limits and qualifies the exact scope of the "good works" which form the new obligation of the one who is "created in Christ Jesus." These works are particular and definite. They are none other than those good works which have been before ordained for each believer. Such "good works" can be discovered and realized only as the life is wholly yielded to the will of God.

Three revelations concerning the place and value of human works in relation to salvation should be distinguished:

1. Works as required under the law

In all this body of truth, human works are set forth as being meritorious. It was because of human works that divine blessings were bestowed. This was an essential characteristic of law-relationships to God, and

it is the exact opposite of grace-relationships. Under grace, it is because of divine blessings that human works are wrought. The law was exactly and appropriately applied by Christ to the lawyer when He said: "This do and thou shall live" (Luke 10:28. Cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34. See also Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30).

2. Works as the proper test of saving faith

This aspect of truth is taught by James 2:14-26.

In this Scripture it is declared that true salvation will be manifested outwardly by good works. This should be expected when salvation is said to be "unto good works." Such good works will serve to justify the saved one in the eyes of the world. This is but the counterpart of the more fundamental doctrine, that justification before God is by faith alone (Rom. 5:1). An important exception to all this is the fact that a saint may, for a time, be walking "in darkness." At such a time there will be abnormal results in his life before God and before the world.

3. Works as indicative of the attitude of heart toward the grace of God

Works which are impelled by the consciousness of a right relation to God through His grace are treated as works of obedience and unto life eternal, while works of any character which are wrought apart from saving faith are treated as works of disobedience unto indignation and wrath (Rom. 2:1-16). One manner of life represents the obedience of faith; the other manner of life represents the disobedience of unbelief.

The first purpose of God to be mentioned in saving people, and which seems to be least, is, then, the good works which are made possible only through the salvation that is wrought by His power and grace. If this revelation concerning our salvation "unto good works" stood alone--which, alas, it too often is supposed to do--the work of God for humanity would be greatly limited and misrepresented.

Under a solitary emphasis on this aspect of the divine purpose in the salvation of men, God is made to appear as a heartless taskmaster directing infinite undertakings and interested in humanity only to the extent of the service that He can derive from people. And, should their productiveness cease through age or weakness, they inevitably must be thrown into the refuse. Happily this divine motive in the salvation of men does not stand alone.

B. People Are Said to Be Saved Because of the Benefits Which Accrue to Them

This motive is stated in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

By this Scripture, God is said to be moved in one's salvation because of two priceless blessings which will thus be bestowed on the one who believes:

- (1) That he "should not perish" and
- (2) that he should "have everlasting life."

This divine motive would seem all-sufficient, and it is, again, and too often, the only motive which is considered by many. Individual salvation with its personal benefits is now challenged by some writers and teachers as being selfish and narrow. This challenge is both unwarranted and wicked. Salvation must be individual by its very nature, and the eternal benefits to the individual who receives the gift and grace of

God are beyond comprehension. These personal benefits are the expression of the very essence of the love and favor of God. To challenge them is no less a sin than to discredit the wisdom and goodness of God. The scriptural safeguard against an overemphasis on the human advantage and benefit in salvation does not consist in discrediting the tremendous revelations regarding individual salvation; it consists rather, in the exposition of the just balance of truth which is gained from the added revelation concerning the third and far greater motive in the salvation of men, to wit:

C. People Are Said to Be Saved for the Manifestation of Divine Grace

The final and supreme motive of God in the salvation of people is declared in Ephesians 2:7: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Accompanying this declaration of the supreme purpose of God, a statement is made concerning the saving work of God for the individual. By this saving work, those are "made alive" who were "dead in trespasses and sins," and are "raised" and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," who were "without Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world."

By these two revelations regarding the present estate of the saved, two essential aspects of the divine undertaking in salvation are disclosed:

- (1) That which is wrought in a person--represented by the gift of eternal life, and
- (2) that which is wrought for a person, even the eternal position in Christ--represented by the fact that an individual being saved is now seated "in the heavenly in Christ Jesus."

What, then, is the supreme motive in the salvation of people? The answer is clear:

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in [by means of] his kindness [that gracious, saving thing he does] toward us through Christ Jesus."

God's supreme motive is nothing less than His purpose to demonstrate before all intelligences--principalities and powers, celestial beings, and terrestrial beings--the exceeding riches of His grace. This God will do by means of that gracious thing which He does through Christ Jesus. All intelligences will know the depth of sin and the hopeless estate of the lost. They will, in turn, behold people redeemed and saved from that estate appearing in the highest glory--like Christ. This transformation will measure and demonstrate the "exceeding riches of his grace."

The supreme purpose of God is to be realized through the salvation of people by grace alone. So fully does that supreme purpose now dominate the divine undertakings in the universe that everything in heaven and in the earth is contributing solely to the one end. To gain the realization of this supreme purpose, this age, which continues from the death of Christ to His coming again, was ushered in.

These long centuries of human struggle were decreed for this one purpose. No vision which is less than this will prove sufficient. People with blinded eyes do not see afar off. To such the world is moving on by mere chance, or to the supposed consummation of some human glory in the earth. Eyes thus blinded see naught of the glory of heaven; minds thus darkened understand nothing of the supreme purpose of God in the demonstration of the exceeding riches of His grace. But, when this age is consummated it will be clearly seen by all beings in heaven and in the earth that these centuries of the on-moving universe have

been designed for no other reason than the realization of the supreme purpose of God in the salvation of men by grace alone.

The out-calling of the "church which is his body" from both Jews and Gentiles is the outworking of God's purpose to gather into one heavenly company all the redeemed of this age. The supreme purpose is realized in their salvation and this design was the "mystery," or sacred secret, which was hid in other ages, but which is now revealed to "holy apostles and prophets" of this dispensation.

The ministry entrusted to the apostle Paul was "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11).

Israel must remain blinded until this purpose is realized (Rom. 11:25), and the mystery of iniquity must work until this heavenly company is saved and taken away with the removal of the restraining Spirit of God (2 Thess. 2:7).

It may be added, as well, that the other divine motives in the salvation of men, already mentioned, only contribute to the realization of the one supreme motive. The "good works" of those who are saved are the "effectual working" of every part of the body making "increase of the body" (Eph. 4:16), and the results of that saving grace which is exercised toward the sinner--that he should not perish but have everlasting life--are only to the end that all of the saved ones together may demonstrate in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace.

And, again, the purpose of God, which is to show the exceeding riches of His grace, reaches beyond the boundaries of this age and is the supreme divine purpose in the whole creation, preservation, and consummation of the universe.

Christ is declared to be the cause, center, purpose, and benefactor of all creation. "All things are created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17), but the important aspect of all salvation centers in the fact that "through the blood of his cross" He is to reconcile all things to Himself. "And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Col. 1:21-22).

Of all the aspects of His eternal person, the emphasis falls on the fact that He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Even those who are redeemed by His precious blood and who are the outshining manifestation of the grace of God, were chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world"; moreover, the "good works" of those who are saved, which are for the proclamation of the Gospel of His saving grace, were "before ordained" that they should walk in them.

So, likewise, sweeping on into the ages to come, we are told that of all the glories that will belong to the Lord of Glory, that glory which was given to Him because of His redeeming love will be all-surpassing: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things

under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:6-11).

It is declared of Him that He is "appointed heir of all things"; by Him the ages were programmed; He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person; He upholds all things by the word of His power. But to what purpose is this marvelous unfolding of His eternal being if it is not to relate His deity to His present saving grace; to accomplish which, it is stated, He, having "by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:2-3)? Thus absolutely does the whole universe throughout the program of the ages center about the sacrificial death of the Son of God, by whom that heavenly company are to be redeemed, purified, transformed, and translated into the eternal manifestation of the riches of grace.

The complete manifestation of divine grace which is to be revealed in the glory will be by means of all that combines in Christ--the glorious Head, together with His redeemed body, every member of which will have been transformed into His very image. What a spectacle for angels and archangels, principalities and powers, mankind and demons! Yes, what a spectacle for God Himself; for He will then gaze on that surpassing manifestation of His grace to His own "exceeding joy" (Jude 24)!

Divine grace could have had no place in this universe until sin had entered.

Through creation, the wisdom and power of God had been disclosed, but there had been no unveiling of God's love for the undeserving, since there had been no occasion for its manifestation. This statement does not imply that we are to sin that grace may abound. There is a wide difference between the fact that God permitted sin to enter the world, and the thought that thereby God licenses man to sin. Whether there have been greater motives which have actuated God in permitting sin to enter the world than He as revealed, none can say. It is certain, however, that the greatest motive that He has been pleased to reveal is to be inferred from the fact that grace cannot be exercised where there is no demerit, and that He designs above all else that His saving grace shall have an actual and adequate demonstration in all the ages to come. How could it be otherwise?

What poverty of experience would reign in a universe that had never dreamed of true heart-compassion, the incomparable joy of forgiving and being forgiven, or that never would have heard the victory song of the redeemed!

A universe which otherwise would have been, with all its magnificence of celestial glory, as cold, unyielding, and unapproachable as the law of infinite righteousness itself, has been colored and warmed by the penitent's tears, and by the unveiling of the unfathomable grace of God toward the sinful. Highest of all revealed glories--and who can measure its relative import?--the boundless grace of God is being manifested through the salvation of sinners. Such is the spectacle concerning which angelic hosts and human throngs will marvel, and about which they will sing throughout the ages of the ages to come.

Returning to Ephesians 3:8-11 we read that the apostle Paul was sent to preach the "unsearchable riches of Christ." Such riches could be brought to light only by means of the fact of sin and its cure through the cross of Christ.

The apostle was also sent "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery [sacred secret], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

This sacred secret is, according to the preceding context, the calling out and saving in this age of a company from both Jews and Gentiles, which company is the true "church which is his body." By the salvation of these, He purposes to unveil before all heavenly hosts His greatest display of wisdom as it is seen in the manifestation of His bosom of love through the coming of Christ into the world to redeem the lost. For we read:

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

At no point can tolerance be given to the theory that the innocent man in the Garden of Eden was God's first and highest ideal, that sin entered in spite of God, and that redemption is an afterthought--the best available remedy in view of the wreckage of sin.

It is a redeemed sinner who takes the highest place in glory.

This redemption was in view before all creation. The finite mind is soon overwhelmed in the contemplation of the eternal facts and purposes of God, but there is much that we may understand when we read, first, concerning the coming of Christ into the world to redeem by His precious blood: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:20); "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8); and, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). And, second, when we read concerning the eternal purpose of God in the saved: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2), and, again, "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. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

It is evident, therefore, that the supreme motive of God in the creation, preservation, and consummation of the universe, in the permission of evil to enter the world, and in the mighty undertakings of salvation as it is now offered to sinful men through the death and resurrection of Christ, is that His "riches of grace" may be disclosed to all intelligences within the whole scope of creation.

If the supreme motive of God is to reveal His grace, then salvation must be by grace alone, or the eternal purpose of God must fail. Hence we read: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10); "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4-5); "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6); "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (Acts 15:11). On no other basis can grace be manifested than by salvation which is wholly unrelated to human merit or works.

II. Three Principles Which Cannot Coexist with Grace

It has been shown that the three essential principles which antagonize and if permitted would frustrate the principle of pure grace are set aside in this age for the sole purpose that grace may prevail uncomplicated

and uncompromised. The divine annulling of every opposing principle to pure grace is not only natural, but necessary, if the supreme divine purpose of this age is the manifestation of grace and that purpose is to be realized.

The three essential principles already mentioned and which can never coexist with pure grace are:

A. Any Recognition of Human Guilt

God must be free to exercise grace without the slightest limitation because of human demerit and sin; for grace would no longer be grace if its benefits are withheld from the sinner in the least degree because of sin.

Grace can only be exercised where every question of unworthiness has been banished forever. This God has accomplished in the Cross, and for the purpose that His supreme manifestation of grace may be realized to infinite perfection. The Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world, and God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. By these and many other Scriptures it is revealed that the grace-opposing principle of sin and demerit has been removed from before the eyes of God for all humanity. Thus, and only thus, could divine grace be exercised toward all people. But since God through the death of Christ has, in the absolute sense, dealt with the sin of the whole world, He is now free by the exercise of grace, in the absolute sense, to lavish its riches upon the chief of sinners without reservation or diminution.

Divine grace thus awaits on divine justice; for only as the last demand of infinite righteousness against sin has been paid can divine grace be exercised. There can be no admixture of these principles wherein divine justice is partly satisfied and to such an extent God is partly free to act in grace. Every vestige of demerit must be removed before God can exercise grace. This vital truth about grace cannot be too strongly emphasized. The operations of divine grace can never overlap or share in any aspect of the operations of divine justice, but when divine justice has finished its work and abandoned the field forever, divine grace is free to occupy the field alone in the full blaze of its infinite glory.

Thus grace now "reigns through righteousness"; but it is grace alone that reigns.

A righteous throne of awful justice, wrath, and blasting judgments has become "a throne of grace." Such is the marvel of God's infinite favor. Such is the good news which is to be proclaimed to a ruined world; for it is grace alone that is now offered to hell-deserving sinners. Only by the absolute removal of the condemnation of all sin could the way be made clear for the absolute manifestation of the grace of God.

B. Any Recognition of Human Obligation

No more can grace remain grace, if by its benefits there is created and imposed the slightest obligation for payment or remuneration. Grace is unrecompensed favor. Its riches must be bestowed and received only on the ground that it is an uncomplicated gift. "I give unto them eternal life," and "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (John 10:28; Rom. 6:23).

In order that the field might be absolutely clear for the manifestation of uncomplicated divine grace, God has perfectly eliminated every work of humanity--past, present, and future--from the terms of salvation by grace: "not of works, lest any man should boast"; and, "if by grace, it is no more works"; "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted [reckoned] for righteousness"; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

One must take salvation as a gift. He need only believe in order to be saved. The complete setting aside of human obligation as payment for divine blessings is the only ground upon which God can be free to act in unlimited divine grace toward sinners, but every human work and obligation is now set aside, and pure grace is offered to all men in the Gospel of the grace of God.

C. Any Recognition of Human Merit

This third opposing principle to divine grace has been disannulled by the fact that humanity is now stripped of every conceivable merit before God.

As has been stated, revelation concerning the present relation of fallen man to God goes far beyond a disclosure of the fact that man is a sinner both by nature and by practice. This of itself would be a sufficient cause for condemnation, but, beyond all this, God has now pronounced an all-inclusive, judicial, condemning sentence on the whole race, both Jew and Gentile. By this universal sentence every individual has been reduced to the lowest level, so far as human merit before God is concerned.

In the affairs of men, there is a legitimate field in which they may compare themselves one with another as to relative moral character and action; such comparison is now completely eliminated from all divine estimations of unregenerate men. This important fact is one of the characterizing features of this age and forms an essential factor in the present supreme purpose of God in which He purposes to manifest His grace.

Apart from this judicial sentence against all men, the grace of God could never be manifested.

The following Scriptures disclose this present universal decree of divine judgment against all men, and in considering them it is important to note that this universal judgment is not a mere estimation of the various degrees of human guilt; it is an arbitrary leveling of every human being to a basis which is absolutely without merit or standing before God.

"For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom. 3:9),

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:22);

"For God hath concluded them all [Jew and Gentile] in unbelief [disobedience], that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32);

"That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

It is true that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," which indicates that man is a sinner by practice; it is a far deeper revelation that all, by judicial sentence, are under "sin" and "unbelief" and are all now equally "guilty" before God.

In exact agreement with the present universal leveling of all humanity to the place of supreme and unconditioned condemnation is the equally important revelation that, through the substitutionary death of Christ for all people as sin-bearer (John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:14, 19), the ground of universal divine condemnation is no longer the sins which people have committed and which Christ has borne; but rather the condemnation is now because of the personal rejection of the Savior who bore the sin.

This is set forth in His Word:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18);

"But he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

In confirmation of the fact that men are now condemned because of unbelief, it should be noted that when the Spirit of God approaches the unsaved to convince them of sin, He does not shame them, or blame them, concerning the sins they have committed; He rather convicts them of one sin only:

"Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:9).

So, also, Christians are said to be free from all condemnation on the sole ground that they have believed on the Savior:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned" (John 3:18. Cf. John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 5:19).

The conclusion to be derived from this investigation into the present standing of man before God is that he is universally "condemned," "under sin," and reckoned to be in "unbelief." This divine decree permits no variations or gradations. It represents the very lowest level of standing before God to which it is possible for any human being to descend, and all unregenerate men are now placed on that level.

At this point God offers but one remedy. That remedy is GRACE.

By the complete removal of all consideration of human merit, God is now unconditionally free to act in grace in behalf of humanity. On no other ground could grace be exercised. Hence, all preaching of law observance, or moral reform, to unregenerate people is unwarranted, misleading, and is contrary to the essential fact of divine grace; for no moral appeal, or appeal to human works, can be made apart from the assumption that, should unregenerate people comply with such appeals, they would not be discredited to the same extent before God as they would otherwise be.

In this dispensation there is no middle ground for half-good people.

They are either utterly condemned under the universal decree of the Judge of all the earth, or they are perfectly saved and safe in the grace of God as it is in Jesus Christ.

It is either Christ or hell.

The divine objective in reducing humanity to the lowest level of all conceivable grades of human standing before God is not merely to give adequate expression to His hatred of evil: it is the expression of His infinite goodness and love; for only thus could the riches of His grace be extended to them. He has reckoned them to be in unbelief "that he might have mercy [grace] upon all": and "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

Only when human merit has thus been removed forever, can divine grace undertake its saving work.

The grace of God which is offered so freely to the sinner is not a variable quantity which might be adapted to the different degrees of human sinfulness; it is an unchangeable whole. It is standardized and cannot be increased or diminished. It is all that God can ever do for the sinner in time or eternity. It is as infinite as He is infinite. Such measureless grace is now freely offered to the sinner. He has but to receive Christ in

whom all fullness dwells. Men are either "under sin," or "under grace."

They are, in the most unequivocal sense, either lost or saved.

In order that grace might be measured in all its limitless riches and glory, the objects of that grace are lifted from the lowest level of human standing before God to the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory. Everything has been divinely arranged so that this transition may be a measurement of divine grace.

To this end the widest extremes that are possible for God to decree in human positions have been determined. Such is the present low estate of the lost under the universal divine decree, and such will be the exalted estate of the saved in the highest glory when grace shall have completed its work.

Of no archangel has the Lord prayed as He has prayed for the objects of His grace: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (John 17:24). These two extremes, represented by the present estate of the lost, on the one hand, and the coming heavenly glory of the saved when finally transformed into the very image of Christ, on the other hand, are the boundaries which measure the infinite grace of God. The positional transference of one from the lowest level that divine judgment can decree to the highest altitude of heaven, the change from a death-doomed, hell-deserving sinner to a son of God and a partaker of the eternal glory, are demonstrations of the measurement of His own grace which God has decreed and with which He is to be forever satisfied.

Since God's grace is to be manifested in glory, it is required that every aspect of the saving transformation shall be wrought in grace alone. All human merit is of necessity excluded.

So, also, since the ultimate estate of the saved in glory is to be such that they will then be "like Christ" and "conformed to the image" of God's Son, and "faultless before the presence of his glory," it is equally demanded that this divine transformation shall be free from every human touch. Such measureless results can be secured and guaranteed only as the work of God is uncombined with any human work. The best human work could but mar and spoil the divine ideal. Therefore it is "by grace that you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

Having in the most absolute sense disposed of the three grace-opposing principles--human sin, human obligation, and human merit, God, in the same absolute sense, is now free to lavish His undiminished grace upon whomsoever He will. He purposes thus to manifest His grace, not merely as a selfish gratification of display on His part, but rather as a satisfaction of His love which knows no bounds.

Only as grace is seen to be the realization of the supreme purpose of God can the expressions used in the Scriptures concerning the outflow of that grace be understood. The resources of language have been exhausted in the attempt to indicate the infinite grace of God in terms of human speech.

Probably these resources of language have been more exhausted at this point than concerning any other theme of the Word of God. How could it be otherwise? God through grace purposes the realization of the greatest undertaking and accomplishment in all the universe. The following Scriptures unfold the limitless character of His grace:

"And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for [added to, or heaped upon] grace" (John 1:16);

"Abundance [superabundance] of grace" (Rom. 5:17);

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound [superabound]" (Rom. 5:20);

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound [superabound]?" (Rom. 6:1);

"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding [above measure] grace of God in you" (2 Cor. 9:14);

"The abundant [more than enough] grace" (2 Cor. 4:15).

Grace heaped upon grace, superabounding, and without measure is the description given of the limitless outflow of divine favor.

The grace of God belongs to the realm of the infinite. His measureless love and goodness are released from every restraint. They are unshackled and free. The supreme divine objective is then, that infinite love may manifest itself in superabounding grace. His love is knowledge-surpassing, infinite, and eternal. So, also, is His grace.

III. The Gracious Work of God for Humanity

The uncomplicated work of God for man, which is to measure His grace, is presented in the Word of God in seven major aspects:

A. The Finished Work of Christ

This is no less than the combined values of His redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation, as these aspects of His Cross are related to the whole world lost in sin (1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:19-20; 1 John 2:1-2). This aspect of the divine work is forever "finished" for every soul, and its "glorious achievement is the good news of the gospel of saving grace."

B. The Convicting Work of the Spirit

By this work of God the gospel of His saving grace is revealed to the mind and heart of the unsaved by the Spirit of God. He convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:7-11). Only by this illuminating work of the Spirit can the Satan-blinded mind of the unsaved (2 Cor. 4:3-4) understand the way of life in Christ Jesus.

C. The Saving Work of God

This divine undertaking includes every aspect of the work of God that is accomplished at the instant when the sinner believes on Christ. It is no less than many transforming miracles which are wrought instantaneously and simultaneously in the saving power of God.

D. The Keeping Work of God

The dear biblical testimony is to the effect that the believer is kept always and only through the grace and power of God. Because of the work of Christ on the cross, God is presented as not only being free to save meritless sinners, but He is presented as being free to keep those whom He has saved. Under legal relationships people endured in order that they might be saved (Matt. 24:13). Under grace relationships people endure because they are saved (John 10:28). God alone is "able" to keep.

E. The Delivering Work of God

The Christian who is perfectly saved from the guilt and penalty of sin needs also to be saved from the reigning power of sin. God alone can save in any case, and therefore deliverance from sin, weakness, and failure is provided, not by human effort, but by the power of the indwelling Spirit; and is secured, not, on the principle of works, but on the principle of faith. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Deliverance, too, is always and only a work of God.

F. The Work of God in Christian Growth

Too often Christian growth is confused with spirituality, or deliverance from the power of sin. A very immature believer, as to growth, may be delivered and be in the full blessing of the Spirit. He has yet much to learn from experience and from the Word of God, but this need not limit his immediate blessing of heart and life. In fact only spiritual Christians grow. Carnality in life means perpetual babyhood in spirituality. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

G. The Final Presenting Work of God

It is the final and consummating work of God to present the believer faultless before the presence of His glory to His own exceeding joy. It is promised that when we see Him we shall be "like him." We shall then be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

No one will persuade himself that he will assist in this final transformation and translation. No more can any believer assist in any of these aspects of the work of God. Salvation is the work of God alone. It is from Him, by Him, and to Him. In every stage of the development it is the work of God alone which can avail, and that work is now provided and offered in marvelous grace. Particular emphasis is needed at this point. Salvation is of God; man's responsibility is only that of being a recipient of it. Man is called upon to make only such personal adjustment to God as will place him in the normal position to receive the divine blessing. The undertaking is of such a character that man can contribute in no way to its accomplishment. It aims to reproduce the very perfection of Christ Himself, which perfection would be ruined could man touch it. And it is all to the demonstration of the grace of God in the ages to come and hence, as certainly, precludes the thought of any complication with human merit, else the greatest motive of God which has been working from before the foundation of the world would be defeated--a contingency impossible in the light of revelation.

According to the Scriptures, the human element is never included beyond the essential adjustment of man to the work of God.

This human responsibility is always expressed in terms which suggest that man is the recipient of the benefits of the work of God. Some of these Bible terms are: "believe," "receive," "faith," "By me if any man enter in," "Come unto me," "Whosoever will may come," "Whosoever calleth," "turned to God," being "reconciled to God."

Thus it is seen that one is saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, not by expiating his own sins, but by believing in the One who has suffered in his stead.

After one is thus saved, he is delivered from the power of sin in his daily life, not by anxious striving, but by yielding, and by relying on the all-sufficient, indwelling Spirit. He will be saved from the presence of sin into

the coming glory and likeness of Christ, not by any effort or human device, but by the power which wrought in Christ to raise Him from the dead, and, by which he will be translated instantly from the earth to heaven.

In every instance the divine responsibility is seen to be within the sphere of the actual accomplishment of the mighty undertaking; one's responsibility is in the sphere of the reception of that work. The whole transaction is free from every consideration of remuneration, barter, or trade. It is the love of God expressing itself in His gracious work for those who, within themselves, will ever be hopelessly undeserving and therefore eternally debtors to infinite grace.

Salvation is the work of God for man; it is not the work of man for God.

Salvation is the bestowal and actual impartation of eternal life; it is not the beauties and artificial imitations of ethical living.

Salvation is the imputed righteousness of God; it is not the imperfect righteousness of man.

Salvation is according to the faithful calling of God; it is not according to the fitful carefulness of man.

Salvation is a divine reconciliation; it is not a human regulation.

Salvation is the canceling of all sin; it is not the cessation from some sin.

Salvation is being delivered from, and dead to, the law; it is not delighting in, or doing, the law.

Salvation is divine regeneration; it is not human reformation.

Salvation is being acceptable to God; it is not becoming exceptionally good.

Salvation is completeness in Christ; it is not competency in character.

Salvation is possessing every spiritual blessing; it is not professing any special betterment.

Salvation is always and only of God. It is never of man. It is the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It is to good works in which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

The phrase, "a second work of grace," used by certain groups of professing Christians is opposed to the plain statements of Scripture and contradicts the most vital fact about divine grace. As has been seen, GOD, when free to act at all, releases the whole of His infinite grace as the expression of His infinite love. His grace, therefore, is without reserve, is super-abounding and limitless. Necessarily there are certain aspects of development in the full realization of that which is wholly bestowed at the moment one is saved. Provision is made for the child of GOD to "grow in grace" (never into grace), to be "kept by the power of God," to be delivered from the reigning power of sin, and to experience new power and blessing when rightly adjusted to the indwelling Spirit. He will eventually be presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory. If he sins, his restoration, forgiveness and cleansing will be accomplished on the ground of his salvation through the Cross and in no case as another exercise of divine grace. The following Scriptures, descriptive of all believers, are conclusive on this question:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:" (Ephesians 1:3).

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9, 10).

"For all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Corinthians 3:22, 23).

"The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Timothy 6:17).

Nothing remains to be added to the positions and possessions to which every saved one has been brought through grace.

Though indwelt by the Spirit, not every believer is filled with the Spirit. The Spirit's filling, experienced only through a right adjustment to GOD, is not limited to a "second" blessing. Continuous or repeated infillings are contemplated with corresponding blessings (.Acts 2: 4; 4:8, 31). The very tense of the verb used in Ephesians 5:18 is decisive: "Be [getting continuously] filled with the Spirit."

Deeper and more wonderful blessings are always awaiting the child of GOD, but in every case it will be seen that these are only the realization of that which was once and for all bestowed in the infinite, saving grace of GOD at the moment of believing.

IV. The Grace of God Is Sovereign

Not every member of the human family will be included in the glorious, grace-revealing company of the redeemed in heaven. Nothing is more clearly taught in the Scriptures than this; the salvation of those who are being gathered into that company, it is revealed, will be according to the sovereign purpose of God, and not according to any merit in the individual. There are two fields of divine undertaking wherein the work of God stands alone;

(1) The creation of the universe and

(2) the redemption of sinners.

Certain aspects of work, however, are entrusted to men.

They are appointed

to preach the gospel to the lost,

to edify the saints by teaching, and

to cooperate in the gathering and care of the assemblies of believers.

Yet even this human service is impotent apart from the enabling power of the Spirit of God.

So, also, while God is sovereign in the salvation of men, He has allowed sufficient latitude within the larger circles of His unalterable purpose for the exercise of the human will. "Whosoever will may come." This is the invitation to the unsaved. Likewise He addresses the believer concerning the possible blessings of a Spirit-filled life by such words of human responsibility as "yield", "reckon", and "confess".

It is equally revealed in the Scriptures that such action of the human will is never apart from the divine enablement. God must move the heart of the unsaved: "No man can come to me, except the Father which

hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

He must move the heart of the saved as well: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

There is no biblical ground for the theory that even the minutest detail of the eternal purpose of God will ever be uncertain because of a supposed unanticipated action of the human will. God cannot be disappointed, defeated, or surprised. The glorious company of the redeemed will, therefore, be gathered according to an "election of grace."

Two outstanding facts are disclosed in the Scriptures in regard to the attitude of God toward this world:

(1) Back of the secondary question of the human choice for which one is held responsible is the more important fact that God has permitted men to be born and live who He as certainly knows will reject His grace with all the woe that their choice entails. Thus there is no escape from the fundamental fact of the sovereignty of God by emphasizing the superficial issues of a human choice. And

(2) God is under the compelling force of His own boundless love to be the Savior of all men. He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Thus, if divine love for a lost world can form any incentive in the heart of God, according to the Scriptures, there is formed an equal incentive toward all. These statements are seemingly contradictory one to the other, and the solution of the problem they present is never found in seeking to minimize the one in the hope of preserving the other.

Theological systems have been developed, made their appeal, and failed at this very point. The solution of the problem is never found in the range of human reason; it is perfectly solved in the range of divine righteousness.

Being unable to penetrate the infinite issues involved, man may rest on the absolute righteousness of God. The glorified saint, looking back over the steps of the divine accomplishment will then see that all God did was right. Here faith alone can minister rest to the soul. The consummation of the age will be seen to be according to infinite wisdom, love, and power. It will be to the eternal satisfaction of God whose tenderheartedness is boundless and whose justice can never be diminished. It will be all-satisfying to His saints, for it is declared that they will be "satisfied" when they awake in His likeness.

The gospel of the grace of God is to be preached to all men with an appeal to their wills. The result will be a selection and election according to sovereign grace. It will be in absolute accord with infinite goodness, and the result will be to His own exceeding joy.

Every form of evangelism which tends to force the decision of the will beyond the sovereign movements of the Spirit on the hearts of men is fraught with infinite perils.

No emphasis on the importance of preaching the gospel of grace in its purity can be too strong.

Biblical preaching must present saving grace with no admixtures of limitations because of human sin, human obligation, or human merit. Only thus can there be the fullest cooperation of the Spirit of God, and only thus can the messenger be saved from the unrevoked anathema which is pronounced (Gal. 1:8-9) on all those who pervert the gospel of the grace of God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/lewis-sperry-chafer/salvation-by-grace/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net