

The Riches of Grace in Christ Jesus

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon explains the 'riches of grace in Christ Jesus' and the thirty-three positions of salvation that are accomplished in and for the believer at the instant of believing.

Topics: "Salvation By Grace", "Christian Living"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer emphasizes the distinction between what God has already done for all believers and what He does for individuals at the moment of belief, focusing on salvation from the guilt, penalty, and condemnation of sin. The doctrine of salvation is divided into God's completed work for believers and the believer's response in living a life worthy of their calling. Chafer highlights the divine order of first lifting believers to exalted positions by God's grace, followed by the call to live consistently in light of these blessings.

Transcript

IN CONSIDERING the Bible doctrine of salvation it is important to distinguish between those things which have already been done for all, and those things which are done for the individual at the instant he believes. The sum total of that which has been done for both classes constitutes "the riches of grace in Christ Jesus." But the things divinely accomplished at the instant of believing alone form that aspect of salvation which is already accomplished in and for the one who believes. This is salvation in its past tense aspect, i. e., salvation from the guilt, penalty and condemnation of sin. This portion of the doctrine of salvation, like the other tense aspects, includes only what God is said to do for man, and nothing whatsoever that man is said to do for God, or for himself. There is an important distinction to be made, as well, between the drawing, convincing work of the Spirit for the unsaved when He convinces of sin, righteousness and judgment, and "the things that accompany salvation." The former is the work of God in bringing the unsaved who are blinded by Satan (2Cr 4:3, 4) to an intelligent decision for Christ; the latter is the outworking of that salvation after they believe. So, also, there is a difference to be noted between the work of God in the past tense aspect of salvation and the growth and development of the one who is thus saved. He is to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He is to be "changed from glory to glory." These, too, are divine undertakings for the individual, and are in no way a part of that which is wrought of God the moment one believes.

Most of the great doctrinal epistles of the New Testament may be divided into a general two-fold division: namely, first, that which represents the work of God already accomplished for the believer, and, second,

that which represents the life and work of the believer for God. The first eight chapters of Romans contain the whole doctrine of salvation in its past and present tense aspects: the last section, beginning with chapter twelve (chapters nine to eleven being parenthetical in the present purpose of God for Israel) is an appeal to the saved one to live as it becomes one thus saved. This section opens with the words, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Such a manner of life is naturally to be expected from the one who has been divinely changed. It is a "reasonable service." So the entire closing section of Romans is an exhortation to that manner of life befitting one who is saved.

The first three chapters of Ephesians present the work of God for the individual in bringing him to his exalted heavenly position in Christ Jesus. Not one exhortation will be found in this section. The helpless sinner could do nothing to further such an undertaking. The last section, beginning with chapter 4, is altogether an appeal for a manner of life befitting one raised to such an exalted heavenly position. The first verse, as in the opening words of the hortatory section of Romans, is an epitome of all that follows: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

The first two chapters of Colossians reveal the glory of the Son of God and the believer's present position as identified with Him in resurrection life. This is followed by the two closing chapters, which are an appeal that may again be briefly condensed into the first two verses of the section: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

It is important to note the divine order in presenting these most vital issues. The positions to which the believer is instantly lifted by the power and grace of God are always mentioned first and without reference to any human merit or promises. Following this is the injunction for a consistent life in view of the divine blessing.

It is obvious that no attempt to imitate this manner of life could result in such exalted positions; but the positions, when wrought of God, create an entirely new demand in life and conduct (in the Word of God these demands are never laid upon unregenerate men). Such is always the order in grace. First, the unmerited divine blessing; then the life lived in the fullness of power which that blessing provides. Under the law varying blessings were given at the end according to the merit: under grace full measure of transformation is bestowed at the beginning and there follows an appeal for a consistent daily life. It is the divine purpose that a Christian's conduct should be inspired by the fact that he is already saved and blessed with all the riches of grace in Christ Jesus, rather than by the hope that an attempted imitation of the Christian standard of conduct will result in salvation.

In turning to the Scriptures to discover what it has pleased God to reveal of His saving work in the individual at the instant he believes, it will be found that there are at least thirty-three distinct positions into which such an one is instantly brought by the sufficient operation of the infinite God. All of these transformations are superhuman, and, taken together, form that part of salvation which is already the portion of every one who has believed. Of these thirty-three positions at least five important things may be said:

First, They are not experienced. They are facts of the newly created life out of which most precious experiences may grow. For example, justification is never experienced; yet it is a new eternal fact of divine life and relationship to God. A true Christian is more than a person who feels or acts on a certain high

plane: he is one who, because of a whole inward transformation, normally feels and acts in all the limitless heavenly association with his Lord.

Second, The Christian positions are not progressive. They do not grow, or develop, from a small beginning. They are as perfect and complete the instant they are possessed as they ever will be in the ages to come. To illustrate, sonship does not grow into fuller sonship, even though a son may be growing. An old man is no more the son of his earthly father at the day of his death than he was at the day of his birth.

Third, These positions are in no way related to human merit. It was while we were, yet sinners that Christ died for the ungodly. There is a legitimate distinction to be made between good sons and bad sons; but both equally possess sonship if they are sons at all. God is said to chasten His own because they are sons, but certainly not that they may become sons. Human merit must be excluded. It cannot be related to these divine transformations of grace; nor could they abide eternally the same if depending by the slightest degree on the finite resources. They are made to stand on the unchanging Person and merit of the eternal Son of God. There are other and sufficient motives for Christian conduct than the effort to create such eternal facts of the divine life. The Christian is "accepted (now and forever) in the beloved."

Fourth, Every position is eternal by its very nature. The imparted life of God is as eternal in its character as its Fountain Head. Hence the Word of His grace: "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." The consciousness and personal realization of such relationship to God may vary with the daily walk of the believer; but the abiding facts of the new being are never subject to change in time or eternity.

Fifth, These positions are known only through a divine revelation. They defy human imagination, and since they cannot be experienced their reality can be entered into only by believing the Word of God. These eternal riches of grace are for the lowest sinner who will only believe.

That God may in some measure be glorified, some, if not all, of these position are here given. "The half has never been told." The reader is humbly invited to remember that these things are now true of each one who believes, and if there should be the slightest doubt as to whether he has believed, that question can be forever settled even before the following pages are read:

I. In the Eternal Plan of God:

Foreknown, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29. See also 1Pe 1:2).

Elect, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1Th 1:4. See also 1Pe 1:2; Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; Tts 1:1).

Predestinated, "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will" (Eph 1:11; Rom 8:29, 30; Eph 1:5).

Chosen, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mat 22:14; 1Pe 2:4).

Called, "Faithful is he that calleth you" (1Th 5:24, etc.).

II. Reconciled:

Reconciled by God, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2Cr 5:18, 19; Col 1:20).

Reconciled to God, "Much more being reconciled to God" (Rom 5:10; 2Cr 5:20).

III. Redeemed:

Redeemed by God, "In whom we have redemption through his blood" (Col 1:14; 1Pe 1:18; Rom 3:24, etc.).

Out of all condemnation, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1; Jhn 5:24; 1Cr 11:32; Jhn 3:18).

IV. Related to God Through a Propitiation:

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1Jo 2:2; Rom 3:25, 26).

V. All Sins Covered By Atoning Blood:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree" (1Pe 2:24; Rom 4:25, etc.).

VI. Vitally Conjoined to Christ for Judgment of the "Old Man" Unto a New Walk:

"Crucified with Christ," "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him" (Rom 6:6).

"Dead with Christ," "Now if we be dead with Christ" (Rom 6:8); "We being dead to sin" (1Pe 2:24).

"Buried with him," "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).

Raised with Christ to walk by a new life, principle, "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4; Col 3:1).

VII. Free from the Law:

"Dead," "Wherefore, my brethren, ye, also are dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom 7:4).

"Delivered," "Now we are delivered from the law" (Rom 7:6; Gal 3:25; Rom 6:14; 2Cr 3:11).

VII. Children of God:

"Born again," "Ye must be born again"(Jhn 3:7; 1:12; 1Pe 1:23).

"Quickened," or made alive, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13).

"Sons of God," "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1Jo 3:3; 2Cr 6:18; Gal 3:26).

"A new creation," "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (creation) (2Cr 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10).

"Regeneration," "But according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tts 3:5; Jhn 13:10; 1Cr 6:11).

IX. Adopted (placed as adult sons):

"Ye have received the Spirit of adoption" (Rom 8:15, etc. So, also, a future adoption, see Rom 8:23, etc.).

X. Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ:

"Made the righteousness of God in him," "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom 3:22; 1Cr 1:30; 2Cr 5:21; Phl 3:9).

Sanctified positionally, "Christ Jesus, who is made unto us * * * sanctification" (1Cr 1:30; 6:11). This is in no way to be confused with experimental sanctification as mentioned in Jhn 17:17, or the final perfection of the believer (Eph 5:27; 1Jo 3:3).

"Perfected for ever," "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Hbr 10:14).

"Made accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6; 1Pe 2:5).

"Made Meet," "Giving thanks to the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12).

XI. Justified:

"Therefore being justified by faith" (Rom 5:1; 3:24; 8:30; 1Cr 6:11; Tts 3:7).

XII. Forgiven All Tresspass:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14; 2:13; 3:13; Eph 1:7; 4:32. A distinction is necessary here between the complete and abiding judicial forgiveness and the oft-repeated forgiveness within the family of God. See 1Jo 1:9).

XIII. Made Nigh:

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13. With this there is a corresponding experience; see Jam 4:8; Hbr 10:22).

XIV. Delivered from the Powers of Darkness:

"Who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness" (Col 1:13; 2:13-15).

XV. Translated into the Kingdom:

"And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13).

XVI. On the Rock Christ Jesus:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Cr 3:11; Eph 2:20; 2Cr 1:21).

XVII. A Gift from God to Christ:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (Jhn 17:6, 11, 12, 20; Jhn 10:29).

XVIII. Circumcised in Christ:

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11; Phl 3:3; Rom 2:29).

XIX. Partakers of the Holy and Royal Priesthood:

"Holy priesthood," "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1Pe 2:5).

"Royal priesthood," "But ye are * * * a royal priesthood" (1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6).

XX. A Chosen Generation and a Peculiar People:

"But ye are a chosen generation, * * * a peculiar people" (1Pe 2:9; Tts 2:14).

XXI. Having Access to God:

"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18; Rom 5:2; Hbr 4:14-16; 10:19, 20).

XXII. Within the "Much More" Care of God (Rom 5:9, 10):

Objects of His love, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph 2:4; 5:2, etc.)

Objects of His grace,

For salvation, "For by grace are ye saved" (Eph 2:8).

For keeping, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom 5:2).

For service, "But to every one of us is this grace given" (Eph 2:7).

For instruction, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age" (Tts 2:12, 13).

Objects of His power, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward" (Eph 1:19; Phl 2:13).

Objects of His faithfulness, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hbr 13:5; Phl 1:6).

Objects of His peace, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body" (Col 3:15).

Objects of His consolation, "Our Father which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation" (2Th 2:16).

Objects of His intercession, "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hbr 7:25; Rom 8:34; Hbr 9:24).

XXIII. His Inheritance:

"That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18).

XXIV. Our Inheritance:

"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4; Eph 1:14; Col 3:24; Hbr 9:15).

XXV. A Heavenly Association (Eph 2:6):

Partners with Christ in life, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (Col 3:4; 1Jo 5:11, 12, etc.)

Partners with Christ in position, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

Partners with Christ in service, "God is faithful, by, whom ye were called into fellowship (partnership) with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1Cr 1:9); "Workers together with God" (1Cr 3:9); "Workers together with him" (2Cr 6:1); "Ambassadors" (2Cr 5:20); "Ministers of God" (2Cr 6:4); "Ministers of the New Testament" (2Cr 3:6); "Epistles" (2Cr 3:3).

Partners with Christ in suffering, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2Ti 2:12; Phl 1:29; 1Pe 2:20; 4:12, 13; 1Th 3:3; Rom 8:18; Col 1:24).

Partners with Christ in betrothal, "That I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ" (2Cr 11:2; Eph 5:25-27).

XXVI. Heavenly Citizens:

"For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phl 3:20, R.V.; Eph 2:19; Hbr 12:22; Luk 10:20).

XXVII. Of the Family and Household of God:

"Fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph 2:19; 3:15; Gal 6:10).

XXVIII. Light in the Lord:

"Now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8; 1Th 5:4).

XXIX. Vitally United to the Father, Son, and Spirit:

"In God" (1Th 1:1).

"In Christ" (Jhn 14:20).

A member in His body (1Cr 12:13).

A branch in the Vine (Jhn 15:5).

A stone in the building (Eph 2:19-22).

A sheep in His flock (Jhn 10:27-29).

A part of His bride (Eph 5:25-27).

A priest of the kingdom of priests (1Pe 2:5, 9).

A saint of the "new generation" (1Pe 2:9).

"In the Spirit" (Rom 8:9).

XXX. Blessed with the "First Fruits" and the "Earnest" of the Spirit:

"Born of the Spirit" (Jhn 3:6, etc.).

"Baptized with the Spirit," "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1Cr 12:13; 10:17).

Indwelt by the Spirit. "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own" (1Cr 6:19; 2:12; Jhn 7:39; Rom 5:5; 8:9; 2Cr 1:21; Gal 4:6; 1Jo 3:24).

"Sealed by the Spirit," "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30; 2Cr 1:22).

XXXI. Glorified:

"And whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom 8:30).

XXXII. Complete in Him:

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col 2:10).

XXXIII. Possessing Every Spiritual Blessing:

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

Such is the work which is now fully accomplished in and for the lowliest sinner who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is all superhuman and God alone could do it: nay, if man could even have any part in that work it would at that point of contact be imperfect, and therefore be blasted and ruined forever. These marvels of grace constitute that "good work" which He has but begun in those who trust Him. To this much more is yet to be added according to Phl 1:6. "He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ." The "riches of grace" are the beginning; the final presentation in glory in the likeness of Christ will be the completion. Such a final perfection and such an eternal being is the greatest divine undertaking for the one who has been lost in sin. Nothing less than this would satisfy the infinite love of God. That He might thus be free to satisfy His boundless love for us He met all the issues of sin for a lost and ruined world, and so perfectly has He wrought that man need now but believe and thus receive the bounty of His grace. It is "Grace reigning through righteousness." "For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

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