

CHAPTER XIV

THE GRACE OF GOD (Continued)

In the preceding chapter we gave several good and harmonious definitions of grace by others, and added our own thoughts in an attempt to help our readers understand the meaning of grace. In this chapter we wish to lead our readers into the various aspects of grace. Wherever grace operates it has a throne and so we shall write on

The Reign of Grace

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Paul personifies SIN and GRACE and speaks of them as two royal figures, two queens on their thrones. He then shows what each gives to her subjects. Sin has death in her painted hand, while grace has eternal life in her white and charming hand.

1. Grace is more powerful than sin. Here is the sinner's only hope, although until quickened by the Spirit of grace, he does not know it. No man can rescue himself from the tyranny of sin. Sin is too much for any man. Men are taken captive by the devil: *"And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"* (II Tim. 2:26). Men may reform, but they cannot regenerate themselves. They may give up their crimes and their vices, but they cannot give up their sins. *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"* (Jer. 13:23).

2. Grace reigns lawfully. The reign of grace is a righteous reign. Grace is not against the law. Grace does not seek to destroy justice that would be to divide God against Himself. Grace honors the law by giving the Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfied the law by becoming our Surety, and bearing the guilt of our sins in His own body on the tree. God dealt with His Son in justice that He might deal with sinners in grace.

3. Grace reigns by Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is not the source but the medium of grace. Grace has its source in the heart of God, and operates according to the sovereign will of God. The word reign suggests a king or a queen on a throne. And a throne speaks of power, and resources. The power of grace is the power of God. This makes it fitting to speak of irresistible grace. Surely we can speak of an irresistible God! The resources of grace are to be found in God. The blood of God's Son is the capital stock of grace. When His blood loses its value then grace has become bankrupt and the believer will be lost. But this shall never be!

"Thou dying Lamb, thy precious blood
 Shall never lose its power,
 Till all the ransomed church of God
 Be saved to sin no more."

4. Grace reigns in every phase and step of salvation. "Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." Salvation is a comprehensive term, including within its scope all the aspects and stages of deliverance from sin. Every aspect and every stage of salvation is of grace, and this precludes human merit at any and every point. Salvation from beginning to end is of grace.

(1) **Grace reigns in foreknowledge.** The first thing God ever did for His people was to foreknow them. In His foreknowledge He set His affection upon them. He foreknew them with the intention of blessing them. He loved them with an everlasting love, and this love was a gracious love, and in no wise was it merited.

(2) **Grace reigns in election.** Election is of grace: "*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace*" (Rom. 11:5). Election was not on the ground of foreseen merit in sinners, but of gracious love in God. In II Thess. 2:10 Paul speaks of "*them that perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved;*" and then exclaims with reference to the saints: "*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*" (II Thess. 2:13). We have two things in this text: first, why men are saved; and second, how they are saved. They are said to be saved because God chose them unto salvation. And they are saved by being sanctified by the Spirit and by believing the truth, the truth of the Gospel. This is what made them differ from "them that perish: *because they received not the love of the truth.*" Had it not been for the choice of God and the sanctification of the Spirit, the Thessalonians would also have rejected the truth. Therefore, God is to be thanked for their salvation. Now, why did God choose them? Was the ground of God's choice foreseen faith, or some other good in them: or was it grace in Himself? Rom. 11:5,6 gives the answer: "*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*"

"Tis not that I did choose Thee,
 For, Lord, that could not be;

This heart would still refuse Thee,
But Thou hast chosen me."

(3) **Grace reigns in predestination.** To predestinate is to determine destiny beforehand. Predestination is never said to be unto damnation, but unto salvation. God causes nobody to be damned; sin is the thing that damns men. But God is the cause of salvation. *"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"* (Rom. 8:29). Why were people predestinated to such glory? Was it because of their foreseen faith or goodness? In Eph. 1:5,6 we have the answer: *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."*

(4) **Grace reigns in our calling.** *"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. 8:30). The word "called" is never in the New Testament applied to those who are the recipients of a mere external invitation of the gospel. It always signifies an inward and effectual call, a call that brings to Christ and salvation. And this call is of grace according to II Tim. 1:9: *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"* and in Gal 1:15: *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace."*

"Twas sovereign mercy called me,
And taught my opening mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
To heavenly glories blind."

(5) **Grace reigns in justification.** Justification may be defined as the judicial act of God in which He declares the believer to be no longer under condemnation, but to have a standing of righteousness before Him. Justification and condemnation are antonyms. The justified person is free from the guilt of sin. Is this blessing a matter of merit or of grace? Rom. 3:24: *"Being justified freely (without any cause in me, C. D. C.) by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* *"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. 8:30).

(6) **Grace reigns in conversion.** In conversion a change is wrought in the sinner. There is a change from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan unto God. There is

a change of opinion so that he believes what he once rejected; a change of affection so that he loves what he once hated. What explains such a change? Does the sinner convert himself? Does darkness create light? Does death beget life? Does filth produce purity? Then, and not till then, can the sinner convert himself. If God converts the sinner, does He do it as a matter of obligation or grace? Paul gives grace credit for his conversion. After speaking of himself as a persecutor of the saints, he says, *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"* (I Cor. 15:10).

"O to grace how great a debtor

Daily I'm constrained to be"

(7) **Grace reigns in glorification.** *"Whom he justified them he also glorified"* (Rom. 8:30). Glorification is the complete deliverance from every aspect and vestige of sin. It is the crowning work of redemption by which we will become personally glorious and in glorious surroundings. It takes in the body as well as the soul. Our salvation is not complete as long as these bodies of ours remain in the grave or, if living, continue mortal. Let time write wrinkles upon the brow; let sorrow's scalding tears wet the cheeks; let sickness and pain twist and torture this body into a shapeless mass; and let death turn it into a veritable dust-heap; still grace shall win for us and fashion it into a glorious body like unto that of our dear Lord. *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (I Peter 1:13). *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"* (I John. 3:2).

Provisions of Grace

Grace, like the Good Samaritan, not only meets the present emergency, but provides for future and eternal blessings. Let the trembling sinner be told that there are ample provisions of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one who feels the plague of his own heart may come to Jesus Christ for healing. He gives all a gracious invitation and assures a hearty welcome. Hear His words: *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). Though vile as Manasseh, filthy as Magdalene, guilty as the cross thief, He will not turn away the poor in spirit. He turns no real beggar from his gate, though full of sores and vermin. His heart is lined with sweet compassion, and His hands are filled with the richest gifts. He has supplies for all needs: legs for a lame beggar, eyes for a blind one, cordials for a faint one,

garments for a naked one, a fountain for a filthy one; Yes, and a rope for a sham beggar who asks for mercy and talks of merit. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (I Tim. 1:15).

"How firm A foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word;
What more can He say than to you He hath said-
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"

God's Grace is Manifold

There is sustaining grace for seasons of sorrow, triumphing grace for times of temptation, persevering grace for days of discouragement. There is teaching grace, living grace, and dying grace. But time and paper would fail me to tell of the sin of frustrating grace by teaching salvation by works, and of abusing grace, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, by pleading grace as a license to sin. Grace has delivered every believer from the guilt of sin, from the love of sin, and will yet deliver from the very presence of sin. Until the dear Lord returns to complete His work of grace, every believer will experience with Paul the inward workings of sin, and confess with him, that *"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I"* (Rom. 7:15).

"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."