

# GOD'S ASTOUNDING GRACE

The Doctrine of Grace  
Simply Explained  
from Scripture  
For Ordinary Christians

by

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## INDEX

### Page

<u>Prologue</u> .....	1
<u>Our Topic: Free Grace</u>	
<u>Our Audience: Ordinary Christians</u>	
<u>Our Purpose: Edification</u>	
<u>What Is Grace?</u> .....	4
<u>Our Need of Grace</u> .....	7
<u>The Election of Grace</u> .....	12
<u>The Price of Grace</u> .....	21
<u>The Attraction of Grace</u> .....	30
<u>The Triumph of Grace</u> .....	35
<u>Epilogue</u> .....	38
<u>A Call to Faith</u>	

**PROLOGUE**

May the Lord send forth this little booklet with His blessing, that it may bring the reader to a fuller appreciation of God's grace, and bring glory and honor to the God of all grace.

**Our Topic: Free Grace**

Grace! What a wonderful word! What, an astounding revelation! Christians of all times have reveled in the astounding wonder of God's grace. John Newton, former slave trading sailor turned saint, wrote the well known lyrics, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!" Another hymn writer enraptured with the thought of grace wrote, "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt." Still another gloried in grace by writing,

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus

Deeper than the mighty rolling sea.

Wonderful grace

All sufficient for me, for even me;

Broader than the scope of my transgressions,

Greater far than all my sin and shame;

O magnify the precious name of Jesus,

Praise His name!

Grace is central to biblical Christianity. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of the grace of God. "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Grace is what distinguishes the faith once for all delivered to the saints from "faiths" concocted by human thought. No one can rightly accuse one of "majoring on the minors" when he majors on grace, for the message of grace is found in Scripture from cover to cover, and is interwoven throughout the fabric of the whole Bible. Hence, right thinking on this topic is essential for personal salvation, as well as for holy living. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18). Grace is a topic of supreme importance.

### **Our Audience: Ordinary Christians**

By the term "ordinary Christians," nothing degrading is implied. Rather, we mean those believers in Christ who have not had formal theological training in a Bible college or seminary. Certainly there is a big difference between being godly and having a seminary degree!

Much of the material available in printed form on the topic of grace is inaccessible to ordinary Christians because of theological jargon. This jargon often proves confusing, sometimes even to those who think they understand the terms. Ordinary Christians get discouraged from reading much on the topic of grace because of technical language. Terminology can be terminal! A truly biblical treatment of the topic need not resort to the vocabulary of the professional theologian. All the terms we really need to teach about grace are found within the Bible itself.

"Ordinary Christians" also denote believers who have an absolute commitment to Scripture. They know the Bible is God's Word, and that its teachings are the final court of appeal. They are willing to abandon previously held ideas about anything, if they become convinced that Scripture teaches otherwise. They seek to let the Bible speak for itself, rather than searching the Bible for support for their preconceived notions. They test everything they hear by the Scriptures, and cleave to what is good, rejecting everything else. Such were the noble Bereans; they were teachable, but not gullible. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Oh, dear reader, are you teachable enough to receive whatever God's Word says, no matter how wrong you have been in the past? Are you willing to embrace truth, even though it proves to be unpopular, even among your Christian friends? "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). If so, then read on. This booklet is addressed to "ordinary Christians" like you.

### **Our Purpose: Edification**

Whenever doctrinal precision is highly valued and displayed in Bible teaching, some will accuse us of improper motives. "You're going to confuse people! You're going to split the church!" However, we firmly believe that people are confused and division is rife in local churches because of doctrinal sloppiness, not doctrinal

precision. Our purpose in this booklet is to edify the individual believer by instructing him in the biblical doctrine of grace. Surely the truth edifies! As long as we have spoken the truth in love, we need not fear confusion will result. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33).

As the saints are built up individually, spiritual unity among them results as well. Accurate Bible teaching promotes true spiritual unity among Christians. The kind of unity exalted in the New Testament was not organizational unity, or unity enforced from without, but unity which sprang up from common faith and thinking. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). God is the author of this kind of unity and peace, as in all the churches of the saints. That is why two Christians who have never met and who may have very different backgrounds can enjoy precious fellowship together: they have the same Bible! Our purpose is not to split theological hairs, but to edify both the individual and the Christian community. If we have been true to Scripture, these lofty goals will be attained.

### **WHAT IS GRACE?**

Dear reader, would you humbly ask God, right now, to give you insight into His truth as we consider these matters from Scripture together? The words of the psalmist are appropriate: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). Now let us look into God's Word for the truth about grace.

### **Simply Defined:**

Though the word "grace" in Scripture has a variety of usages, our focus will be on grace as it relates to salvation. Literally, it means a "gift." A good, short definition is "the unmerited favor of God." Note that grace is free, or else it would not be a gift. Notice also that it results in blessing, implied by the word "favor." Finally, grace has a downward direction; that is, it comes to us from God Himself. He is the fountain of every good and perfect gift. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

However, defining grace so tersely is something like describing the Grand Canyon as "beautiful." Carefully consider this description of grace:

*The word grace is a kind of shorthand for the whole sum of unmerited blessings which come to men through Jesus Christ. Primarily, it describes what we, for*

*want of a better expression, have to call a "disposition " in the Divine nature; and it means the unconditioned, undeserved, spontaneous, eternal, stooping, pardoning love of God.*

This is what we have in mind whenever we use the word "grace" in this booklet.

### **A Distinction:**

#### **Common Versus Saving Grace**

God, in his grace, blesses mankind abundantly and in many different ways. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Peter 4:10). So when we speak of the grace that believers have received versus the grace that everyone receives, we must make a distinction.

God's grace towards all men is obvious and undeniable. A cartoon once showed the neighbors of a pastor wondering why the refreshing rain was falling only on his lawn while theirs was parched and dry. When he returned from vacation, he explained that he had made arrangements before he left! God doesn't work that way. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). "The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works....The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16).

God's grace to all is evident in the spiritual realm as well as the physical. God has revealed Himself to all men, so that none are completely without a knowledge of Him. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Psalm 19:1-6); "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:18-20). He grants sinners time to repent even if they ultimately persist to the end in their stubborn rebellion. "How long, ye

simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. 1:22); "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1). We refer to God's abundant goodness toward all men indiscriminately as common grace.

By saving grace, we are referring to the grace of God that brings salvation. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). This grace is not enjoyed by all since it is evident that not all men will be saved. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). Only believers are saved by grace, through faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Unbelievers perish, since they do not receive saving grace.

Our focus will be on saving grace, rather than common grace. We want to learn from Scripture about the grace of God which results in personal deliverance from sin and condemnation.

## **OUR NEED OF GRACE**

Before we can appreciate fully the blessing of God's grace, we must have a biblical understanding and keen awareness of our own need of grace.

A simple definition of sin is "disobeying God, or the inner disposition to disobey God." As sinners, we are condemned before God. We deserve God's wrath both now and hereafter. God clearly set forth His requirements to man, and man has flagrantly, repeatedly, and defiantly fallen short of them.

Not only do we practice sin, we are sinners by nature. We do bad things because we are bad by nature. Rebellion against God is ingrained in us. We are in bondage to sin, held captive as its slaves. We cannot free ourselves from sin; only God can deliver us. The only hope for sinners like us is God's almighty grace. These things are clearly taught in the Word of God.

## **The Fact of Sin**

Of course, our initial rebellion against God began in the garden of Eden. God permitted our first parents to eat of every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve ate of it and disobeyed God (Genesis 3).

Though God was gracious to Adam and Eve, they still produced corrupt, sinful offspring. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). Their first son, Cain, expressed his antagonism toward God by killing Abel his brother (Genesis 4). A sinful nature has been passed on to all Adam's sons. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Even from birth, we enter this world with a sinful nature. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job 15:14-16). That speaks of you and me!

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). The word "foolishness" here comes from a Hebrew word meaning "perverse, quarrelsome, licentious, guilty." Though children are often thought of as completely innocent and without sin, this is mere illusion. The fire of sin smolders in their little hearts, and is fanned into a flame as they grow up, except for the grace of God. The only exception to this, of course, is Jesus Christ our Lord, who was completely without sin. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:22-23); "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (I John 3:5).

These truths are summarized and expressed in the most universal terms. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10-12,23).

### **The Bondage of Sin**

The Bible clearly teaches that men are by nature enslaved to sin. Jesus' true disciples really knew the truth and enjoyed spiritual liberty. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The Jews who heard him did not realize how enslaved they were, and how much they needed the freedom of which Jesus spoke. "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:33). Then the Lord said "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). From the context, it is obvious that the word "servant" is used to mean "slave, one who cannot free himself from his bonds. Sin is the master.

That this is the condition of every lost man is explicitly taught in many Scripture texts. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

Referring to Simon the sorcerer, "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). Again, speaking of false teachers, Peter taught, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Peter 2:19).

Men are also the captives of Satan by nature. "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). He is the god of this world, and all the unsaved serve him, because he has blinded their minds to the gospel, so they cannot see its glory. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3-4). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Sin is so ingrained in us that no human means can remove it. "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him" (Prov. 27:22). The carnal mind cannot obey God's law, nor please Him. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8). Apart from God's grace, we do not fear Him. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18), nor seek Him. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). We have corrupt hearts which inevitably choose corrupt paths. There is no good thing in us. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). These passages are a mere sampling of many in Scripture which unmistakably set forth our utter inability to do good, or to turn from sin.

In the light of our natural bondage, it becomes powerfully obvious how desperately we need the grace of God to free us. We do not merely need God to show us His glory; we need miraculous healing from spiritual blindness that we might see Him. Neither is it enough for God to speak the truth; we need to have our spiritual hearing restored by His Almighty power. God must do more than



prescribe the medicine, He must raise us from the dead if we are to live. We need no self-help plan from God; we are utterly dependent upon God to save us and make us what we ought to be.

## **THE ELECTION OF GRACE**

"The election of grace" is a phrase taken from Romans 11:5. Therefore, no serious Christian can object to its use. We have heard the question, "Do you believe in election?" Of course we do, for we believe the Bible! A more reasonable question is "What does the Bible teach about election?"

### **The Fact of Election**

There are 48 verses (using three Greek words) in the New Testament alone which make reference to some kind of election. Some use it in a mundane way; others teach deep truths about Christ, Israel, the church, and our own salvation. To elect means to choose out of a group.

This is illustrated well by the election of officers in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6). Certain widows had been neglected in the daily distribution of food, and the apostles, who were busy in the ministry of the Word of God and prayer, exhorted the congregation to choose from among them seven men to take care of this business. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5). In other words, they picked these particular men out of the whole church, passing by other men, to serve the widows. It is nonsense to speak of electing all, for then no choice would have been made. Election is discriminatory, i.e., it distinguishes some from the rest. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). Certainly this verse implies that choice must discriminate individuals from within a larger group.

Another example is Jesus' choice of twelve men to be His disciples. They are spoken of as "the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:2). Before His ascension, Jesus reminded them of His sovereignty in their choice. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16). Christ had by-passed many others in the world whom He might have chosen: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). He did not simply offer a general invitation to become His disciples, and then enlist whoever came forward. He called the twelve personally, one at a time.

The Bible teaches that God has chosen some men from among the human race to salvation, passing by the rest. "But we are bound to give thanks always 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). Note the emphasis on God's sovereignty in this text. Paul thanks God for the Christian brethren, because God was the One who made them Christian brethren! That this was ultimately God's choice is emphasized by the expression "from the beginning, " in other words, before the world was even created; certainly before the saved people at Thessalonica existed. So obviously God chose them first, not vice versa.

Ephesians 1:4 is perhaps even more explicit, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "In Christ" is an expression which denotes our salvation as believers. To be "in Christ" is to be saved. No Scripture bases election relating to salvation on man's choice. Men are not the choosers, but the chosen of God. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12); "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1); and many similar texts.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). This verse clearly teaches that the efficient cause of the new birth is God's sovereign choice, not man's will. Yes, men believe the gospel and are saved, but they believe because God chose them, imparts faith and makes them new creatures in Christ Jesus. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29); "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" (Eph. 2:8-9); "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

### **The Need of Election**

Considering man's natural bondage to sin, it is evident how necessary God's election is. Left to himself, man inevitably wanders from God. Even when God calls man to fellowship by the gospel, apart from His enabling grace by the Spirit, man will not respond.

Those who reject God's sovereign choice of the elect have a very difficult, if not impossible, question to answer: Why is it that some sinners respond in faith to

the gospel and others perish in unbelief? Are the sinners who come to trust Christ more spiritually minded than the others? Are they less blinded by Satan to the glories of the gospel? Are they drawn to Christ by some innate goodness within them? Clearly, the biblical answer to all these questions is "NO!" The unsaved are described as "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:5-7). All unbelievers are blinded by Satan. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4); not one possesses any inherent goodness "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:10-18). In fact, in describing Christians before conversion, Paul classes them together with the mass of sinful humanity, like those yet unconverted in every way. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-3). So we cannot take any credit for the fact that we are saved while others perish.

Apart from God's election, the only other explanation which some offer to answer the question is blind fate. One who rejected God's sovereignty in salvation tried to explain this with an analogy: "Why do some people like chocolate cake while others do not?", as if that solved anything! Do we really believe that the God of the Bible would thus play Russian roulette with each man's soul?

The Bible affirms hundreds, or perhaps thousands of times, God's guiding hand in the affairs of the universe, including each man's destiny. The Lord does whatever He pleases, not only in heaven, but in earth. "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psa. 115:3); "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psa. 135:6). Even seemingly random events, such as the casting of lots, is under His control, as Jonah learned in his experience. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33); "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for

whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah" (Jonah 1:7). God planned the universe from eternity, and now He is irresistibly bringing about His plan. "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand...For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isa. 14:24,27); "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." (Isa. 46:10-11); "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35); "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11); "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11). God's sovereign control includes the free acts of men, both in restraining their sins "And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen. 20:6), and using their sinful acts to further His divine purpose. "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go... And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:13,17-18); "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27-28). God did not create everything and then just permit time and chance to take its toll! "He's got the whole world in his hands," as the old song says.

### **Gracious Election**

At the root of the doctrine of election in all the Scriptures is God's unmerited favor. God has not chosen any individual or nation to receive blessings, temporary or eternal, based on merit. "Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD. Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you" (Deut. 9:6-8). Those who are

saved must attribute their personal favor with God purely to His sovereign grace, not to their own "free will" or to chance. Some have taught that God's choice is based on foreseen faith in the sinner. They say, "God chooses those who choose Him" There are a number of serious problems with this view.

First, it is without a shred of Scriptural support. "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) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (I Peter 1:2), Appeal is often made to which mention "foreknowledge" as preceding predestination or election, but these texts fall far short of teaching foreseen faith in the sinner as the basis of God's choice.

Second, the Bible teaches that faith is a gift from God. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). Not all men have faith. "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith" (II Thess. 3:2). If men cannot have faith apart from God's grace, then it makes no sense to speak of God foreseeing man's faith, as if he brought himself to the point of believing the gospel. A third problem with this view is that a number of passages teach clearly that the basis of God's election of particular individuals is merely His sovereign pleasure. The motivation for His choice is not arbitrary, but it has not been revealed to us.

Consider Ephesians chapter two. Paul says believers were "...by nature the children of wrath even as others" (2:3). We lived just like they do. We had the same evil lusts as they. The same devil that energizes them used to move us to sin. The only difference between believers and unbelievers is the grace of God! God made the difference in us, not we ourselves. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6). God quickened us! God saved us! God raised us up together! And God made us sit together with Christ! To this all Bible believers agree, but we must ask why? Because God is good, rich in mercy, great in love and full of grace. We were helplessly lost except for the powerful, sovereign grace of God!

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). The Lord opened Lydia's heart, so that she believed the gospel Paul preached. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). The same God which spoke

light into existence in His original creation also shines the gospel light in men whose hearts were previously darkened by sin. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25-26). To the arrogant church members at Corinth, Paul addresses the searching question, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7).

There is nothing which brings true evangelical humility to the heart more than these doctrines of grace. We desperately need grace because of our sin, and we receive grace through God's pleasure, not our own choice. We have no one to praise for our salvation but God!

## **THE PRICE OF GRACE**

God's grace is free to us, but it was costly to Him. In order for God to bestow His grace freely upon us, it was necessary for a terrible price to be paid on our behalf.

### **The Wages of Sin**

Sin against God must be punished, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). We have "earned" death because of our disobedience to God. The universal testimony of Scripture is that the penalty of sin is death. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17); "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19); "Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine" (Gen. 20:7); "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me" (Num. 14:29); "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.... The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:4,20); "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James

1:15). God's justice must be satisfied, as well as His mercy. The only way this can be accomplished is if the penalties of God's law are met. Ultimately, no one's sin against God can go unpunished.

### **Christ In Our Place**

This brings us to the very core of the gospel message. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3). The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was a substitutionary, voluntary payment for sins on behalf of helpless sinners, that God's grace might be offered freely and sinners might be rescued from His just wrath.

Jesus Christ died as a substitute for others, and cannot be denied by sincere Bible believers. He Himself was completely innocent of any sin; He was absolutely righteous in every way. Death had no claim on Christ, since He was completely blameless, the perfect example who pleased His Father in all things. "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him....Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John 8:29,46); "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Peter 2:21-22). The Scriptures clearly teach the substitutionary nature of Christ's death in many passages . "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and

shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:1-12); "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7-8); "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18). We who believe in Christ deserved to be punished as Christ was. We were guilty. We merited God's wrath, not Jesus. And yet Christ, who loved us so much, willingly stepped between the sinner and God's wrath, and bore the just punishment for our sins.

Grace demanded that an infinite price be paid: the sacrifice of Christ. The next logical question begging to be asked is, "Who receives the benefits of Christ's death?" In other words, for whom did Christ die? Having established the biblical purpose of Christ's death, let's consider the biblical extent of it.

### **For Whom Did Christ Die?**

This is not a simple question, and neither is the answer simple. Many devout believers have affirmed that Christ died for the whole world, while others, no less devout, have argued that Christ died only for His people, that is, the elect. Another reason this issue is difficult is that there seems to be Scriptural support on both sides.

The Bible says Christ died for the world, for all men, and other such expressions. Consider, for example, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6); "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29); "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17); "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19); "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:4-6); "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (I Tim. 4:10); "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11); "But we



see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9); "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (II Peter 2:1); "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9); "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2); "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (I John 4:14).

Admittedly, some of these are more impressive as proof texts for universal redemption than others, but advocates of the other point of view must take account of these and many other similar passages.

In the light of such texts, what are we to make of other passages which teach that Christ died particularly for the church, also called "His people" and "His sheep"? "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd....But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:11,15-16,26-29); "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28); "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27); "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:8-10); "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:32-33).

Let's think about a few more direct questions and the answers the Scriptures provide. The answers to these specific questions should be just about self-evident to any thoughtful Christian, but we will provide proof texts for each.

Does Christ's death actually save anyone? Yes! "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24); "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9). Does Christ's death actually save everyone? No, or else you must admit that everyone will ultimately be saved and enter heaven, which is not true. "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). Is Christ's death of sufficient value to save the whole world, meaning every individual? Yes, for it has infinite worth. "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:17-19). Did Christ die especially for His people (i.e., the elect) in order to secure their salvation? Yes (see above texts). Can Christ fail to accomplish His determined purpose to save His elect? No. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). Should the gospel be preached universally, indiscriminately? Yes. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Will anyone who believes on Christ be turned away? No. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30); "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). Can any sinner justly blame his condemnation on a deficiency in Christ's work on the cross? No; unbelief is the foul culprit. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19).

These specific questions are a much fuller way to answer the complex question, "For whom did Christ die?" The biblical perspective on this issue may be summed up in one terse phrase: Christ's death was sufficient for the whole world, and efficient only for the elect.

## **THE ATTRACTION OF GRACE**

Can God conquer the stubborn human will of an unsaved man, and bring him to faith and obedience? Does God force people to be saved against their will? Essentially, these are the two questions this section is designed to answer from Scripture.

### **God's Power To Save**

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). Just as God directs the streams to flow one way or the other, so He turns men's minds to one course or another. That is manifestly the sentiment of this proverb. Similar statements "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD....A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:1,9). God is able to change men's minds. Scripture gives us many case histories where this happened.

Take Artaxerxes, King of Persia, for example. This man was not known for his sensitivity to the Spirit of God! Yet he decided to send the Jews of his kingdom back to Jerusalem with a fortune out of his own treasury to rebuild the temple of the Lord! And why did he do such a thing? Ezra, with spiritual discernment, explains the cause: "Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 7:27). God put it in Artaxerxes' mind to show this favor to the Jews, though naturally he would have resisted such an idea.

When Israel strayed from God, He turned the hearts of the Gentiles against them as a rod of correction. Such was the case when Israel had become numerous in Egypt. The Lord knew how to arouse the Egyptians' wrath against Israel, so that she would cry unto Him for deliverance. Incredible as it may seem, Scripture teaches us that God inspired the anti-Semitism in the people of Egypt, right up to the Pharaoh. "Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants" (Psalm 105:23-25). We can see how effective God's influence was when, even after Pharaoh saw the Red Sea part, he rushed into it in his madness to slaughter the Hebrews.

Since God has such complete and awesome control over the minds of men, it should not be surprising to us when we read that God induces men to believe the gospel and be saved. He takes away spiritual blindness, grants repentance from sin and faith in Christ, and imparts eternal life to those dead in trespasses and sins.

We read of Lydia, the first European convert to Christ, in Acts 16:14. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" This was of course, the gospel of Christ. Lydia's heart was closed to the gospel before Paul came. God opened her heart, and so her heart was open. God did not merely invite her to open her own heart. He opened it. Lydia's response was a result of God opening her heart, not vice

versa. And what God did for Lydia, He can do for anyone, no matter how stubborn. He is mighty to save.

To truly know God and Jesus Christ means to be saved, to have eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). We all are born without the saving knowledge of Christ. According to Jesus, it pleases God to hide that knowledge from some, and to impart it to others, resulting in their salvation. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:25-27).

Realizing that man is in bondage to his sin, how could it be any other way? Man cannot free himself from the chains of Satan and sin; only God can free him. And if God delivers a man, he is delivered! Salvation is of the Lord. "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). Christ is the Author and Finisher of our salvation. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). He does not just bring us halfway to salvation, and leave the rest to us. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

God is the one who grants repentance to the self-willed and faith to the unbelieving. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:24-26). If God grants repentance, we are penitent; if He grants faith, we are believing; if He grants salvation, we are saved! What could be more simple?

### **What About Free Will?**

No doubt many reading this will think, "Well, what about man's free will? Does not the Bible present man with a choice, either to receive God's grace, or to reject it? Is not our salvation dependent upon our choice?"

When we speak of free will, we must define our terms carefully. If by "free will" is meant that man is morally neutral, and might just as easily choose the good as

the bad, we reject it completely. Man was innocent before the fall of Adam, but after that, we are born in sin, with a sinful nature, or a predisposition to sin, and a natural enmity against God. Apart from God's grace, man is naturally corrupt and sinful, and unable, of himself, to choose the good, but tenaciously clings to that which is evil, because this is his strong preference. We have already shown these concepts to be biblical under the heading, "Our Need of Grace."

Biblically, man's will is free in the sense that he may choose what he pleases. However, before conversion, we are pleased with sin, and hostile to God. Therefore, unless God changes our hearts, we could never desire what is holy and true, for it merely exposes our sin, and condemns it. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

So God does not passively wait for our choice before He begins to effect our salvation, or else He would wait in vain. Neither does God coerce us to be saved against our will. Rather, He knows how to turn the will, so that those who were previously unwilling to believe on Christ, now turn to Him, with full consent of their will. A children's song captures the truth so well:

"When God wanted the Canaanites out of His land,  
He sent wild hornets, you know.  
He did not compel them to go against their will,  
He just made them willing to go!"  
When God wanted Jonah to go preach His Word,  
And old Jonah fled and said, "No,"  
God did not compel him to go against his will,  
He just made him willing to go.  
God never compels us to go, oh no,  
He never compels us to go.  
God does not compel us to go against our will.

He just makes us willing to go!

The regeneration of each saved person is expressly attributed to the will of God. Our willingness to receive Christ is the result of the new birth, not the cause of it. This is clearly the truth set forth "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). The efficient cause of regeneration is God's will, not natural descent (not of blood). Nicodemus had to learn that being Jewish did not guarantee him a place in God's kingdom; he had to be born again. Neither is the new birth caused by a physical impulse (not of the will of the flesh). Neither is it caused by human decision, or "the will of man." And yet many professed Bible believers go on teaching that in becoming a Christian, everything depends on your decision. According to them, God just patiently waits for you to make the first move, and then God responds to you. No!

The efficient cause of the new birth is God's will, not man's. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). This should settle that beyond all dispute. The God who purposed the salvation of each one He has chosen also regenerates them according to His sovereign pleasure!

### **THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE**

Shall Christ die for sinners and yet see no sinners saved? Could it have been possible that His death would be in vain? Will God begin to save someone and then see them perish after all? Is it possible that a truly saved person could become unbelieving again, or lose favor with God? Could God lose the war with Satan over any soul He intends to save? No! Scripture gives us God's guarantee that grace shall triumph at last!

### **Unfailing Promises**

God's Word is a treasure chest of precious promises to those who believe. His promises are absolutely trustworthy and sure to be kept. Many of these relate to the triumph of grace in keeping us saved unto the end. Let us note just a few.

Describing His disciples as sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ promised them the gift of eternal life, and stressed the security this granted them. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). They are secure in Christ's hand, as well as the hand of the Father. This striking picture denotes God's powerful protective care.

No one admires a quitter. People who are always starting new projects and never finishing any display a lack of character. Could we possibly imagine God leaving His work undone? It is ludicrous to contemplate that after three days of creation, God could procrastinate at all, much less indefinitely. Salvation is God's work in man. Once He begins by grace to save us, He will not rest until His work is finished! That is the thrust of Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." This day of the Lord is the time of our glorification, when we enter our eternal state, without sin, as children of God.

If there was ever a formal statement of the absolute triumph of grace in the salvation of God's elect, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39). The rhetorical questions of verse 35 all imply and require answering in the negative. Paul admits that tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword are not unlikely experiences of true saints, and finds his proof in the Old Testament. Will these things, terrible as they are, destroy the souls of believers? No, a thousand times no! In fact, they merely give the true Christian a chance to demonstrate how mighty God's conquering power in him is! Not merely conquerors are those whom God foreknows, predestinates, calls, justifies and glorifies. "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). More than conquerors, or "super conquerors!" No conceivable contingency will thwart God's ultimate purpose in their lives, that is, displaying His mercy, love and grace to them, since they are "in Christ Jesus." This expression, as we already noted, signifies all those who are saved. Being saved, they shall always be saved!

### **Grace From Beginning To End**

Our salvation is by God's grace from beginning to end. By grace, He became a man to live a sinless life and die a sacrificial death. By grace, He rose from the dead for our justification. By grace, He brought the gospel message to us. By grace, He convicted us of our sin and Christ's sufficiency as a Savior and Lord. By grace, He imparted repentance and faith to our hearts. By grace, He quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins. By grace, He sanctifies us. By grace,

He will complete that work. By grace, He will glorify us with Christ. By grace, He will fellowship with us eternally in heaven. God's astounding grace is one thing on which all Christians should agree and for which all should praise Him!

## **EPILOGUE**

### **A Call To Faith**

#### **(Believe the God of Grace)**

Though Scripture is plain enough to keep us from confusion with the Spirit's help, many sincere Christians have resisted fully embracing the biblical doctrine regarding grace. I am sure that the truths proclaimed in this booklet will be somewhat foreign, or regarded as untrue or exaggerated by some who read its contents.

Let me ask you, reader, Have we misquoted any Scripture text? Have we interpreted any verse in a way which disagrees with its context? Have we failed to grapple with the difficult points in this issue? Have we built our case on what "theologians" or other fallible men have said? In all soberness, we believe these questions must fairly be answered "No."

Let us believe the truth revealed in Scripture, no matter how much it may contradict our previously held notions, no matter how unpopular it may make us even among our brethren, no matter how incredible it may seem. God's Word is trustworthy.

### **A Call To Worship**

#### **(Adore the God of Grace)**

After contemplating the infinite perfection and wonderful plan of God, Paul could not help bursting out in rapturous doxology:

"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" (Rom. 11:33-36).

I know of no other doctrine more conducive to a joyful, reverent, humble, and energetic response of worship from us than the doctrine of the grace of God. Let us praise our gracious God!



## **About the author..**

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Dedicated to...

Mark Womack, my fellow pilgrim in the journey to grace.

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