

## The Gospel and its Gracious Extent

This is a theme we have found to be recurrent and consistent throughout our *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*. Our *Confession*, of course, is not something new and it is firmly founded upon and fixed in pure Biblical and unadulterated truth. These doctrines are the essential basis of our Faith in Christ.

In some ways, - in this chapter, - we are beginning to ‘move out’ of the theological section of the *Confession* and we are entering the practical considerations (e.g. Christian liberty and liberty of conscience, Religious worship, etc.) Therefore, this chapter we are studying can be viewed as a catalyst, a bridge. It takes us from the basics and makes sure we know what it is we must believe in order to pass it on to others.

### OUR DELIGHT IN GOD’S GRACE

- \* As incalculable as is God’s love so is His grace towards sinners.
- \* I think I’m on safe ground when I say it is impossible for God to have loved sinners any greater. ... What more could He have done than that which He did?
- \* He invested eternal thought in His plan for their salvation ... He gave the very Darling of His heart, - His only-begotten Son; Heaven’s Citizen, the all-glorious Son of God knelt before the Throne and received the blessing of the Godhead as He was sent into this fallen world. It is even hard to describe how much God gave ...
- \* Consider what it’s like when the husband and the wife are parted, even for a short time ... what must it have been like for Christ to have left Heaven, - even for thirty-two years, - and to be ‘separated’ from the holiness of eternal perfection in Glory?!
- \* We’ve got to be tremendously careful when we try to describe our thoughts on these matters for they are far outside our ability to comprehend!
- \* In sovereign and wonderful grace God, - in eternity, - set out upon the workings of a plan that would bring glory unto His most precious and most beautiful Name.
- \* This same plan would bring the salvation of His own, elect people.
- \* Some do not like the doctrine of election ... with some others, it doesn’t sit comfortably with their understanding of the Gospel ... but here again our *Baptist Confession of Faith* teaches us what we as Baptists ought to believe, in accordance with Holy Scripture (“...

God in His mercy promised to send Christ ... and by means of the promise the elect would be called, and faith and repentance wrought in their hearts.”)

- \* The Doctrines of Grace are an affront to man’s boasting that he can *somehow* do *something* towards his own salvation.
- \* Let me tell you what some of the enemies of this Doctrine of Grace have said about it:
  - \* John Wesley (Free Grace), “it is a doctrine full of blasphemy ... It overturns both [*God's*] justice, mercy, and truth; yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. ... I abhor the doctrine of predestination.”
  - \* Seventh-Day Adventists, “[*God*] refuses to bypass our free choice; He insists on respecting it. While it is not His ideal will that any ultimately should be destroyed, while He longs for everyone to turn back to Him, many refuse to. And He does not require them to. Human choice is part of the picture.”
  - \* Mormons, “THE CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST of Latter-day Saints rejects the belief in predestination—that God predetermines the salvation or the damnation of every individual. The gospel teaches that genuine human freedom and genuine responsibility—individual agency in both thought and action [*i.e. the free will*] —are crucial in both the development and the outcome of a person's life.”
  - \* Roman Catholicism (Catholic Encyclopaedia), “He who would place the reason of predestination ... in God alone would inevitably be led into heretical conclusions about eternal election. ... Whether Divine predestination does not at least take into account the supernatural good works, the Church answers with the doctrine that heaven is not given to the elect by a purely arbitrary act of God’s will, but that it is also the reward of the personal merits of the justified. ... Predestinarianism is a heresy not unfrequently met with in the course of the centuries which reduces the eternal salvation of the elect ... to one cause alone, namely to the sovereign will of God, and thereby excludes the free co-operation of man as a secondary factor in bringing about a happy or unhappy future in the life to come.”
- \* It is extremely sad that John Wesley errs on the side of such enemies of the true Gospel of Christ.
- \* On the other hand, here are just a few examples of those who hold to the absolute Truth of God’s Word, concerning election ...

- \* Augustine, “Man is not converted because he wills to be, but he wills to be because he is ordained to election”.
- \* Luther, “The saved are singled out not by their own merits, but by the grace of the Mediator”.
- \* Thomas Manton (Puritan preacher), “The Son cannot die for them whom the Father never elected, and the Spirit will never sanctify them whom the Father hath not elected nor the Son redeemed.”
- \* J.C. Ryle, “The believer who knows his own heart will ever bless God for election.”
- \* Spurgeon, “I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I would never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterward”.
- \* Paul, [Rom. 9:11](#) the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.
- \* The Lord Jesus, [Jn. 6:37](#) All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ...
- \* And I believe that the greatest words to build this doctrine upon are the words that Jesus spoke in the cemetery when He stood outside the tomb of His beloved friend; He called to Him, [John 11:43](#) *Lazarus, come forth.* (Out of that whole cemetery, He only called one name and only that one person answered His Sovereign call! Simply ... in His sovereign will, He had elected only one person in that whole place to be raised from the dead ... and He called that one person by name!)
- \* I said to someone on one occasion, “Look at all these great giants of our faith who held to and preached these Doctrines of Grace I also preach” ... “But,” said this person, who had a very limited theological span, “perhaps they needed to be corrected also!”
- \* Well, friends, if I’m going to be in error (as far as the opposition are concerned) I’m happy to be in the company of such men as Augustine, Luther, Spurgeon, the Reformers, Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. ... **Our delight in God’s grace.**

### **OUR DEBT TO GOD’S GRACE**

- \* Were it not for God’s grace we would never be saved. ... Were it not for God’s grace we would never be changed. ...

- \* Were it not for God's grace we would have no home in Heaven to look forward to ... Were it not for God's grace our sins would never be forgiven.
- \* As God's grace is incalculable, so our debt can never be measured ... and yet the Gospel assures us that Jesus Christ washed all our sin away by the precious blood He shed on Calvary.
- \* "The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell. It goes beyond the highest star And reaches to the lowest hell ... O love of God, how rich and pure How measureless and strong; It shall forevermore endure The saints' and angels' song."
- \* We are indebted to God for if He had not saved us, - and taken the initiative to save us, - if the Great Shepherd of the sheep had not come searching for His flock ... we never would have been found!
- \* And yes, I must be diligent in the service of the Lord; I must follow Him as His Word commands and as His Word describes. He has no time for 'unserving servants'! You are either 'in' or you are 'out', - there are no half-measures with Christ! All our confidence and dependence is upon Him.
- \* **Our delight in God's grace, our debt to God's grace ...**

### **OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD'S GRACE**

- \* When the Word of God enters into your soul in the process of salvation it is none less than the Holy Spirit Who lays the seed in the ground which He has already prepared.
- \* In order to be born again, - our *Confession* says, - "an effectual, invincible work of the Holy Spirit upon every part of the soul of man, whereby a new spiritual life is produced. Nothing less than such a work will bring about conversion to God."
- \* The only way God is willing to save sinners is the way He planned in eternity. He doesn't save Muslims one way, Catholics another way, Buddhists another way ... there is only way to be saved, and that is to [believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved](#).
- \* If indeed you are believing in Him for such a crucial and such a vital salvation it means that He has loved you with His eternal electing love; ... He has always loved you ... and consider the factors He used to bring about your salvation, - it may have been a Godly mother and father, or a Godly Sunday School teacher or someone in your work ...

- \* Looking back on it now you can see how He planned it that He would save you. You daren't take one little scrap of a piece to boast that you contributed anything to your salvation for your salvation is all of Him. ... And when it is all of Him, then all the glory is to Him.
  
- \* But what about my loved ones who aren't saved? David, these doctrines of grace, - as much as I want to believe them, - I'm afraid to believe them in case my loved ones aren't among the elect.
- \* Well, yes, I have loved ones who aren't saved, - we all do. I have loved ones who, if they were to die this moment, would be lost and would enter into the eternal flames of the everlasting hell. Yes, I perfectly understand it when you show such concern for your loved ones outside of Christ ... for I have that concern too.
- \* But ... can you get them to church? Can you set them down in the seat beside you? Can you make them sit there until they believe? Can you force them to accept Christ? ... No, sadly you can't!
- \* You are so burdened you would sell everything you possess if you could buy their salvation ... but it just cannot be done.
- \* They won't come near a church ... they won't listen to a sermon on the Gospel ... they won't listen to you when you speak to them of Christ ... you can't make them accept the Gospel. So, what are you to do?
- \* Well, first of all, you need to pray for them ... and in your prayers for them you need to see them walking along a *wide* road, with all its pleasures and attractions on each side.
- \* Those pleasures and those attractions no longer hold their appeal for you, - once upon a time they may have! ... but your loved ones are now *gripped* in their allurements ... and just as you don't understand how they can be so attracted to the life outside of Christ, they equally cannot understand, - truly and genuinely, - the attraction with which you speak of the Saviour.
- \* You need to pray for them ... members of your family and loved ones who are heading towards Hell.
- \* The second thing you need to face up to is that only Christ can save them. They might never come to where He is preached, but be assured ... He will go to where they are.
- \* He went in among drunkards, demon-possessed, liars, adulterers, and all sorts ... He can surely seek out and find the loved ones who you bring to Him in prayer.

- \* Consider where you were ... and people prayed for you ... and Christ found you and saved you.
- \* There is no sinner so deeply indulged in sin that Christ cannot save. There is no place He will not go. He went among the tombs and found the man called Legion; He went by the brothels and found a woman with so many problems as Mary Magdalene had; Christ saves from the 'guttermost' to the uttermost. No-one is outside the pale of His salvation.
- \* He can save those for whom you pray. Are you praying for them, even with tears in your eyes and a heavy burden upon your heart?
- \* You pray for them, you face up to the fact that only Christ can save them ... and the third thing is this, **believe He can!**
- \* There is no point asking Him if you don't trust Him. Look at the kinds of people He has saved and saves. There is absolutely no obstacles to His saving power.
- \* For reasons only known to Himself, He saves some when they are children, others in their teens; some He leaves to middle-age and others to old age; some He even leaves until so late as the deathbed.
- \* You trust in Him to save your loved ones. What a joy when you are living and alive to see them saved; but also what a joy among the angels in Heaven, - if God so plans it this way, - when even your loved one is saved after you are no longer here! And what joy shall be yours when you stand in Glory and you see in the great crowd your wife, your husband, your son, your daughter, your grandchild, your loved one ... the person for whom you prayed ... standing among the Redeemed!
- \* You tell me ... how can any believer find this doctrine of election, - this doctrine of the Gospel and its gracious extent, - abhorrent, ... how can they find it so repugnant? ... *I don't know.*
- \* I believe John Wesley was grieved when he eventually discovered the errors of his old Arminianism ... but what relief it would have been when, - in the grace of God, - he was welcomed him through the gates of Glory; Wesley would then have recognised, **Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 2:5).**
- \* As our *Confession* says, "Nothing less than such a work will bring about conversion to God."