

Digging Deep Into the Special Grace God Has for You

One of the greatest conceptual and theological discoveries I have ever made was when I realized the difference between “common grace” and “special” or saving grace. By common grace I am referring to the fact that God uses and blesses unbelievers, not just His children, to fulfill His purpose in this world. This is why God was able to choose and anoint Persian kings (for example, Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Ahasuerus and Darius the Mede) during the days of the Jewish exile to help restore Jerusalem as well bless and protect His people. This is also why God calls unsaved political leaders in the Roman Empire His ministers (deacons) in Romans 13:4, 7.

If God can call unbelieving, heathen, Roman rulers His deacons, who am I to say I cannot work with unbelieving civic and community leaders for the betterment of our city and nation. This also explains why it is sometimes appropriate for a Christian to vote into political office a person who is not a committed Christian but espouses laws and policies that advance God’s purposes.

Common grace is also exhibited through nature and when God endows the world population with divergent gifts so that civilization can function normally. It seems as though there is just the right percentage of people in the world with visionary, creative, entrepreneurial and administrative gifts; can you imagine if every person in the world was called to be an administrator? Or if everyone was to be a visionary? Or if every person had the same personality traits? The world would fall into either despair or chaos. There is the precise amount of people functioning and expressing themselves through various gifts that enable humankind to co-exist interdependently.

Even the gift of music, art and entertainment, although perverted at times, comes from God with the original intent for us to worship Him and to depict human nature as image-bearers of Christ. This means we can admire aesthetics, good music, film, acting, sports and all profound human skill as a reflection of His image (Gen. 1:26) through His common grace.

Furthermore, Jesus called His followers to be like His Father in heaven who sends the rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:46); that is to say, God bestows His common grace to the world through the weather, nature, the environment and through the gifts of natural law.

Scripture teaches us that in Christ all things hold together in the universe (Col. 1:17). Not even the laws of subatomic physics can operate without the command of the Lord Jesus Christ (cosmic personalism). When Job was confused about his dire plight, God's answer to Him was to trust Him, since He is personally involved in perpetuating the created order (see Job 38-40).

Consequently, understanding the biblical truth of common grace had a profound impact upon my way of thinking as well as how I walked out my calling. Before I understood this, I thought it unspiritual to serve my community with unbelievers; I thought all non-Christian art was of the devil or a waste of time. I still avoid perverted art, music and human behavior whenever possible, but I understand it as a perversion of the original plan of God and not inherently evil.

Through common grace, I have a broader understanding of what Jesus meant when He said He is the truth (John 14:6). This is not just referring to the truth of Scripture but the fact that all truth in this world emanates from Him (science, art, music, mathematics, economics, business, law, ethics.) and apart from Christ, we cannot connect these major cultural mountains with its original purpose. This is why the apostle John said in John 1:9, Jesus is the true light that gives

light to every person coming into the world (every person, not just Christian people).

Of course, as revival and awakening break out in nations and the gospel permeates every sphere of society, then God sanctifies more and more people so that even institutional systems in a community can begin to function under special grace.

In the consummation of human history at the second bodily return of Christ, the whole world, along with all of the (saved) people and systems of civilization will eventually come under the category of special grace (see Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:9-11, Rev. 21:22-22:5).

In eternity's morning, the common will become sacred and the profane will be no more (Ezek. 44:23; Rev. 21:3-8) This means that as time progresses, God will make a greater distinction between the wheat and the tares until the tares are taken out of His world totally (Matt. 13:24-30).

The profane and the common among humankind will suffer historical discontinuity as the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and as His government and peace continue to increase (Hab. 2:14; Is. 9:6,7).

In the present day, as the manifest kingdom of God increases its influence in every sphere, people will begin to recognize His judgments that come on civilization as a violation of biblical ethics and law. Along with the preaching of the gospel, this will eventuate in the whole world being given back to the Father under His special grace to satisfy the finished work of Christ (Col. 1:20). {eoa}

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