

15 Biblical Ways Believers Can Know if They're Operating in God's Special Grace

1. Common grace blesses all men; special grace saves only some men.

As we have seen in part I of this article, in the created order, God bestows His love, mercy, grace and goodness to every creature through what He provides to this world (See). However, we also see that Jesus is only the Lord and Savior of those who believe (Rom. 10:9,10). The first is common, the second is special or saving grace

2-Through common grace, we partner with nonbelievers; in special grace, we partake as members of Christ with other believers.

Once Christ-followers understand common grace, it releases them to serve with other citizens (whether they are believers or not) for the betterment of the community; however, when it comes to having an organic, intrinsic connection with our Lord and Savior, only other Christians are connected to Christ's body in nature and essence (Read 1 Cor. 10:16,17).

3- Through common grace, nature is controlled; through special grace, His Spirit is bestowed.

The Word of God teaches us that the universe is held together by the word of Christ's power (Col. 1:17; Heb.1:3). In that sense, Jesus continually sustains the created order by His common grace and love. However, only those who are His elect, blood purchased children, are able to drink of His Spirit (Read Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:12,13).

4-Through common grace, there are natural gifts; through

special grace, there are spiritual gifts.

Through common grace every human being who ever lived (wicked and righteous, saved and unsaved) were hard wired by God to perform certain functions. This resulted in them being endowed with natural gifts and abilities so they can make a positive contribution to the world. On the other hand, Christ-followers not only have natural gifts through physical birth, but they also have access to the gifts of the Spirit through their spiritual rebirth (Read 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:3-7).

5-Through common grace, we become citizens of the earth; through special grace, we become citizens of heaven.

By His sovereign will and power, God predestined all people to live at a certain time, region and place (Gen. 10,11; Acts 17:26); hence, by His will, we are established in certain communities as citizens of the earth. However, once we are born of His Spirit, we become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) and become part of Mount Zion, the City of the living God in the heavenly Jerusalem and belong to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:22, 23).

6- Through common grace, people understand natural law; through special grace, people understand the lawgiver.

Through God's common grace, He bestowed wisdom by illuminating the minds of great scientists (Like Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein) to unlock the mysteries of natural law as well as creativity to develop the computer sciences to men like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Psalm 111:2 says that the works of the Lord are great and to be studied by all who delight in them. However, it is one thing to study His works and quite another thing to know His ways. We can know about God without knowing Him personally. Only through special saving grace can we know Him experientially (Jer. 9:23,24; Phil. 3:4-12; 2 Pet. 3:18).

7-Through common grace, we build institutions; through special grace, He builds His church

Through common grace, the impetus to build every institute of culture originated, whether it be human government (Gen. 9:5,6), business (Gen. 2:15; Deut. 8:18), skill for the labor force (Ex. 36:1), higher learning and schools (Deut. 6:6-9), and hospitals (the compassion and care shown by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37 inspired the creation of hospices and eventually hospitals in western civilization). However, only Jesus can build His church (Matt. 16:16-19) through the saints He has saved and sanctified through His special grace (Eph. 4:11-16).

8. Through common grace we admire human ability; through saving grace, we adore His creativity.

Like most other people, I admire and love music, sports, art and all creative human endeavors. However, once I was born of His Spirit (through special grace) my focus shifted from worshipping and serving created things to worshipping and serving the creator (Rom. 1:25).

9. Through common grace we co-exist with people; through special grace, we love our neighbor.

Most people of the world cohabitate on several levels, through cooperation, collaboration or merely through tolerating their neighbor. The ability most people in the world have to live together in community irrespective of religious, ideological and ethnic differences are truly a result of the miracle of common grace. However, through special grace, Christ followers are called to unconditionally love their neighbor and even lay down their life for others (Luke 10:29-37; 1 John 3:16).

10. Through common grace, people develop their mind; through special grace, we grow in the Spirit.

Through common grace. God has given a measure of common sense, rationality, logic, comprehension and illumination to every person born into this world. This enables humankind to engage in speech, develop languages, grammar, categories and other

means of communication that enhance societal cohesion. Common grace also enables humans to be self-aware, analyze data, conceptualize abstract ideas and break them down into practical steps for implementation. However, only through special grace can a person grow and live by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-14; 1 Cor. 2: 6-14; Gal. 5:16,17) as well as understand the things of God that are beyond human comprehension and thought (Is. 55:8,9; 1 Cor.2:9-14).

11. Common grace, is temporary; special grace is eternal.

At the consummation of human history, when Jesus fully redeems all of creation, every common thing will become special (Rom. 8:19-22). Hence, common grace is a temporary arrangement since it has both a beginning and an end. Conversely, special grace awaits a new heaven and a new earth, the home of eternal righteousness (2 Pet. 3:10-13). In eternity, there will be no more marriages, no more biological families, no more politics and business as we know it; however, Christ's bride, His church, will continue on to live and reign forever with Christ (Rev. 19:7, 8; 21:1-14).

12. In common grace, we propose principles; in saving grace, we proclaim the gospel.

In the natural world, we have to understand natural law, and principles of operation for every area of human discipline. However, the primary obligation of Christ-followers, whether directly or indirectly through word and deed is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16).

13. In common grace, we tap into human potential; in special grace, we partake of divine power.

In common grace, we have the innate ability to use our God-given gifts and abilities to succeed in this world. However, through special grace, Christ followers don't only depend upon their natural abilities, but are able to tap into His divine power through His precious promises (2 Pet. 1:3,4)

14. In common grace, all people can serve in leadership; in special grace, only godly, theologically sound leaders should serve in leadership.

In the world, we have all sorts of people, godly and ungodly serving humanity through politics, law, business, the arts, the military, the police, sports and education; however, in the church, the criteria for serving in leadership is very high when it comes to emotional maturity, handling finances, raising a family and having sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:1-15). Christians make a tactical mistake when they place the same theological criteria for people in the world as they do the church, especially when it comes to partnering with them for the betterment of the community. I can partner with all leaders in my community if we have a common cause or goal, irrespective of their religion and ideology; however, when it comes to matters in the church I can only partner with leaders who fit the biblical criteria as found in both testaments (For an Old Testament passage, read Ex. 18:21-23).

15-In common grace, we know God as Creator; in special grace, we experience Jesus as Lord and Savior

Finally, all people will be held accountable to know and serve God because He has already revealed Himself to all men through creation (Ps. 19; Romans 1:18-23). However, once a person is born of His Spirit, they not only recognize Jesus as creator but also as Lord and Redeemer. At the close of human history, the common and profane will be swallowed up by the holy and the sacred, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 2:1-12.).

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