

Common Grace

The Universal Benefits of Christ's Death

Common vs. Saving Grace

- Common Grace
 - Recipients: believers & unbelievers
 - Result: temporal benefits
- Saving Grace
 - Recipients: believers only
 - Result: eternal salvation

Definitions

- Bruce Demarest: "the undeserved beneficence of the Creator God expressed by his general care of creation and of all persons everywhere without discrimination."
- Louis Berkhof: "in general it may be said that, when we speak of common grace, we have in mind, either (a) those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, without renewing the heart, exercises such a moral influence on man through His general or special revelation, that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted; or (b) those general blessings, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter, which God imparts to all men indiscriminately where and in what measure it seems good to Him."

Definitions

- Wayne Grudem: "the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation."
- John Murray: "every favor of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God."

General References

- Ps. 145:9 - The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.
- Luke 6:35-36 – "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The Benefits of Common Grace

God restrains His wrath.

- By sustaining the life of His creatures
 - Gen. 2:17 – but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
 - Cf. Gen. 5:5 - So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.
 - Rom. 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - Ps. 36:6b - Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are *like* a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
 - Is. 42:5b - Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it,
 - Acts 17:28a - for in Him we live and move and exist.

God restrains His wrath.

- By restricting the effects of the curse
 - Gen. 3:17 (of thorns and thistles) - Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.
 - Gen. 9:2, 5 (of wild animals) - "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.... "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

God restrains His wrath.

- By delaying or withholding deserved judgment
 - Gen. 8:21 - The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.
 - Rom. 2:4 - Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
 - Acts 17:30 - "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,
 - 1 Pet. 3:20 - who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water.

God upholds His creation.

- Gen. 8:21-22 - The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."
- Job 37:13 - "Whether for correction, or for His world, Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen.
- Ps. 65:9a - You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; The stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.
- Matt. 5:45 - so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.
- Acts 14:17a - and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons."

God restrains sin.

- Through direct intervention
 - Gen. 11:6 - The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.
 - Gen. 20:6 - Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.
 - Gen. 31:7 - "Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

God restrains sin.

- Through the Holy Spirit
 - Gen. 6:3 - Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."
 - 2 Th. 2:6-7 - And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do* so until he is taken out of the way.

God restrains sin.

- Through the human conscience
 - Rom. 2:15 - in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.
- Through the prophets & the Word of God: [Is. 1:16-20](#)
- Through various human institutions
 - Government (Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:14)
 - Family (Eph. 6:4)
 - Marriage (Heb. 13:4)

God gives temporal blessings to all.

- Gen. 27:28 - Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine.
- Gen. 39:5 - It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.
- Ps. 104:13-14 - He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth,

God gives temporal blessings to all.

- Ps. 136:25 - Who gives food to all flesh, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- Ps. 145:9, 15-16 - The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works. The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- Luke 16:25 - "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus' bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'
- Acts 14:17b - He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

God directs human advancement.

- God directs the development or invention of whatever is good and true in the arts, in the sciences, and in technology.
 - [Ex. 31:2-6](#)
 - [Ex. 35:30-35](#)

God provides limited spiritual benefits (even to the unsaved).

- They can do temporal or civil good.
 - 1 Kings 21:27-29 - It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days."
 - 2 Kings 10:29-31 - Jehu
 - Luke 6:33 - "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same.

Westminster Confession

- Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God [16.7].

God provides limited spiritual benefits (even to the unsaved).

- They retain a basic knowledge of certain truths.
 - Natural revelation about God's nature (Rom. 1:18-21)
 - Natural revelation about God's law (Rom. 2:14)
 - An intellectual grasp of the truth (cf. Matt. 23:2-3; cf. Num 22:7, 24:1; 1 Sam. 10:9-11)—but not in a saving, deeply spiritual way (1 Cor. 2:14).
 - An intellectual understanding and assent to the gospel (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-22; Heb. 6:4-6; Matt. 10:5-8)

The Source of Common Grace

- 1 Tim. 4:10 - "we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."
- Rom. 3:25