

Is there such a thing as common grace?

For about 100 years many Bible teachers have taught that there is a grace that is common to all men to do them good. It was not taught by Reformed evangelicals before Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920); however, as a supporter of particular redemption, Kuyper's ideas were not as radical as those today, now accepted by many. This modern teaching avers that: 1] God restrains evil in society. 2] God provides good things for all (food, rationality, seasons etc.). 3] This grace enables evil men to do good works and please God. 4] This grace arises from a general love to all; but it does not lead to salvation. Some (Arminians) add that it also gives man sufficient power to accept or reject the Gospel. Items 3 & 4 are the chief problems, while 2 & 3 need qualifying.

Although this general grace does not save, it is claimed as evidence that God loves everyone, since he provides for all. This is to mistake providence for grace. In his providence God provides all the things that man requires to live (Acts 17:25), but even then the purpose is to safeguard the elect who live amongst the wicked (Eph 1:22). But this providential ordering of the world is not grace.

There is no such phrase in the Bible as 'common grace'; indeed the thought is preposterous – grace can never be common. Grace from God to men is the outworking of the cross and the beneficiaries are only those whom God calls and draws to Christ. Thus grace always results in salvation and eternal life. It is never given to the reprobate (those not elect).

Good gifts are given to all but God has different purposes in this for the elect and the wicked. God's gifts increase the condemnation of those who spurn him. These gifts become destruction to those who do not love God (Rm 11:9; Prov 3:33; Ps 73:18, 92:7). Indeed, wicked men use God's gifts to increase their sin. The gifts God gives such merely prove that God is just in cursing them.

If sun, rain, food and life are grace and love to all, then what about sickness, famine, hurricanes and so on? If common grace results from love to all, then the evil things that befall us (that God is sovereign over) would result from his condemnation and hate to all. The truth is that God sends good and bad things to all, but in these he always does good to his people (Rm 8:28), but hardens the reprobate and increases their condemnation (Prov 23:4).

Common grace ignores the Bible's teaching on total depravity; natural man can do no good at all (Rm 3:10ff), including believe in the Gospel. It is also the breeding ground for the Free Offer.

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