

The Destructive Teaching of Hypo-Calvinism in Common Grace Scripturally Exposed

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My purpose in writing this article is not to deal with the twisting of every obscure text misused by proponents of the common grace error. I intend to refute, by the Word of God, its obvious violations of Scripture's teaching. These arguments will equip readers so that they are able to defend the truth against those who peddle the lie.

The false doctrine of a so-called common grace stands condemned before the Word of God. The charge is treason. It is guilty on all counts of treason and this I will prove:

Exhibit 1: An Erroneous and Deceptive Definition of Grace

Exhibit 2: A Misunderstanding of Rain and Sunshine in the Disposition of God

Exhibit 3: A Contradiction of Christ's Prayer

Exhibit 4: A False Charge That God Has Variables in His Grace, Will and Love

Each of these tenets of common grace will be met head-on by Scripture. Each Scripture is capable of exposing this erroneous doctrine. This deceptive doctrine of common grace stands condemned as it seeks to hide in ignorance through clever manipulation.

Exhibit 1: An Erroneous and Deceptive Definition of Grace

When I buy someone a present, wrap it up and then give it to the person, the first thing he or she wants to know is, what is it? In response, I could say it is a present. However, that is not the answer they are looking for. They know it is a present but they also know a present must *be* something. The word "present"

is a description as to how a thing comes to a person but it does not identify the gift. Only in that limited sense can the thing be defined in such a way.

The same is to be said of the grace of God. We know it comes to (elect) men by way of unmerited favour and in that (limited) sense is it like a present. However, we ought not to define a gift only by its journey to us or the reason it is given to us. In the writings of those who are hypo-Calvinists (or “under” Calvinists, those who teach and believe in common grace), I have never read any of them give any other definition or explanation of grace than this: unmerited favour or undeserved favour.

If the present is a bicycle, are all bicycles presents and are all presents bicycles? One cannot call this logic for it is illogical. Put simply, if I give you a present of a bicycle, how would you define it? Would you define it as a present; are all bicycles are presents? I do not think so. Neither should we define grace like this.

A similar argument involves a letter or a parcel delivered by a postman. The letter or parcel comes to us by post and in that (limited) sense may be called post, but that does not define for us what the postman delivers in relation to what it is.

What they do in their deception, whether intentionally or unintentionally, makes no real difference to their argument in defining grace. Defining grace not by what it is, but by how it comes to men, is deception. Grace is a real gift of God to elect sinners, but those who teach common grace do not define what it *is* and they arrive at false conclusions because of this error.

What does this wrong definition of grace lead us to in its logical outcome? We read in Luke 2:40, “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” Note that “the grace of God was upon” Christ. If we use the common grace definition of “grace” here, we read, “and the unmerited favour of God was upon him.” Is that true? Was the unmerited favour of God upon Christ? Could Christ not merit with God? If that were the case, how could Christ merit for us the forgiveness of sins and die a meritorious death in our place? He could not. This definition leads us to question whether Christ could even be our saviour. In fact, if it were true, it would rule Him out. So this is clearly not an error that we can overlook.

Rather it is our duty to determine what the grace of God really is and then to define it in its most concise, clear and contextual rendering from Scripture. This I will do at the conclusion of this article.

Exhibit 2: A Misunderstanding of Rain and Sunshine in the Disposition of God

Rain and sunshine are essential for life upon earth. Without these, life as we know it cannot exist. Advocates of common grace claim that rain and sunshine are always good gifts, and they are. However, the question is: Do these good gifts reveal the disposition of God, as is taught by the proponents of common grace? Do rain and sunshine always come as a blessing and never as a curse? To all upon whom they fall? Do rain and sunshine always cause a good outcome? Is it not also true that, whereas rain and sunshine cause living vegetation to grow, they also cause dead things to rot and decay? Is rot or decay a gracious, blessed or loving outcome?

Rain and sunshine are part of the providential gifts of God to all men universally. Salvation, in contrast, is particular and uncommon. Salvation, unlike rain and sunshine, belongs to the realm of soteriology. The works and possessions of a man do not influence salvation in the eyes of God. It matters not whether man has much or little. Surely this teaches us that things, even good things, are neutral as regards the divine disposition. The salvation of God is not in things. It is the disposition of God behind the things that determines the effect the good things have on men. A living plant will grow and a dead plant will rot, when subjected to rain and sunshine.

However, common grace maintains that rain and sunshine given to all men commonly proves the disposition of God by way of blessing to all without exception. It is for the welfare of mankind and creation in general. It proves a common love, a common kindness and a common grace for absolutely everybody (according to their own definition), and the good things of rain and sunshine are not simply neutral providential gifts. They see things as being essentially good, always doing good and revealing a gracious disposition of God. We call this false because Scripture speaks very differently:

For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this,
that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the

hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath (Ecc. 9: 1-2).

This Word of God is clear: The things that are before us, including rain and sunshine, do not reveal the disposition of God behind them, either of love or hatred. Things are neutral. The love of God is not evidenced by the things that are before us. This comprehends also other aspects of the disposition of God, including His mercy, kindness and gracious attitude.

Although in watering my vegetables I also water the weeds, this does not mean that I have the same concern for the weeds as I have for the plants which I wish to nurture or that I desire the weeds' prosperity even for a little while. Instead, watering the weeds will cause them to grow, so that I might identify them in order to uproot them. The watering does not display in me a disposition of love for the weeds.

In Psalm 136:13-15, we read,

To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.

This is the Scottish Metrical Version (1650) of the same passage:

13 By whom the Red sea parted was:
for mercy hath he ever.
14 And through its midst made Isr'el pass:
for his grace faileth never.
15 But Phar'oh and his host did drown:
for mercy hath he ever.

This is perhaps even clearer than the AV/KJV, for it lumps grace and mercy together, and states that grace is unfailing. Notice also that God's mercy is seen in the drowning of Pharaoh. I wonder what Pharaoh thought of that kind of

mercy! Pharaoh's drowning was mercy, yet it was not mercy to Pharaoh but to Israel for, in Pharaoh's destruction, God's people were graciously delivered from Egypt. It is clear that God's mercy and grace are not common to all; they are particular to Israel, His beloved people. Grace is not common.

Exhibit 3: A Contradiction of Christ's Prayer

We read in Psalm 69:21-22,

They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.

The New Testament proves that this is a messianic psalm for verse 21 is referred to in John's account of our Lord's crucifixion (John 19:28-30). In Psalm 69:22, Christ speaks of the table of the reprobate on which is served their food and drink, the things that should be for their welfare, the things that hypo-Calvinists refer to as common grace items, things that supposedly reveal God's love for the reprobate and absolutely all men in common. Yet Christ curses these things, things which should be for their welfare but are not.

They are to be a snare and a trap. A *gracious* snare? A *loving* trap? No, for Christ reveals the opposite of a disposition of love and grace to such. There is no love for those caught in the snare or in the trap. Again, common grace opposes Scripture and opposes the very words of Christ upon the cross. Here is their logic explained in the light of this passage: God loves man so much in a common way that He lovingly and graciously provides snares and traps for their welfare!

Verses 26-28 in this same psalm state,

For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

Where in the wide world is there evidence of Christ's or, by implication, of

God's desire to save all men in the light of our Lord's prayer in Psalm 69? It says the exact opposite!

Exhibit 4: A False Charge That God Has Variables in His Grace, Will and Love

We know that God is one, as well as infinite, eternal, unchangeable, holy, etc. This is the biblical doctrine of the simplicity or oneness of God. However, the hypo-Calvinist sees *two* graces in God: one grace that is infinite, eternal and unchangeable, and another grace that is finite, temporary and changeable, a non-saving grace; a common grace which is temporary, as opposed to a saving grace which is not. Both graces are attributed to God and clearly this teaches variables in Him. This teaching opposes the doctrine of God's simplicity. What saith the Scripture?

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:16-17).

No variableness is found in God from the good and perfect gifts that come to all men. Again, Scripture is clear and common grace is wrong. In fact, there is not even a *shadow* of turning. There is no contradiction and no paradox in God.

Common grace proponents are not satisfied only to have variables in the grace of God; they also claim variables in the will of God. To them, God has two wills and contradictory wills at that. With one will they claim that God desires to save everyone and with the other will He desires to save only the elect. What does Scripture say on this? Job 23:13: "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." Again, there is no turning in God's mind or desires. God has one will and what He desires He does. There are no variables in the will of God. God's will is one.

When the hypo-Calvinist reads Romans 9:13, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," he states that this refers to the saving love of God and not the (alleged) non-saving love. The latter is a different type of love which God has for Jacob because they hold to a common love or a common grace for Esau.

It must be that God has a sovereign effectual gracious love for Jacob and a “common gracious love variable” for Esau.

They admit that this common gracious love variable is ineffectual in that it does not save and so it is not sovereign love. It is a non-soteriological divine love for lost and reprobate humans. We are left with the contradictory notion that there are variables in God regarding His love. Yet we know God has no variables. God is love and His love is one, infinite, eternal and unchangeable. It is clear that common grace denies the simplicity or oneness of God.

Finally, how then do they arrive at the strange teaching of common grace? What are the erroneous steps they take?

Step 1: They set out with the agenda of making grace, which is particular, into something that is common.

Step 2: They define grace not by what it is but as to how it comes to fallen man (unmerited favour).

Step 3: By their diversionary definition, they make two graces, one particular and the other common.

Step 4: They turn that which is particularly soteriological into that which is commonly providential.

Step 5: They then, having confused soteriology and providence, use this newly discovered non-soteriological providence as a basis for the well-meant free-offer of the gospel which is soteriological. A clever manipulation designed to deceive!

On the other hand, what do we present as the simple and biblical way to describe grace? The basic meaning of grace in Hebrew and Greek (the biblical languages), as well as English, is beauty, loveliness, charm or attractiveness. That is what it is.

As a result of the fall, man lost the image of God which was beautiful in man. He became ugly and contorted, filthy and distorted. He lost the knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. Spiritually, he died. It was impossible for God, in His absolute perfection, to have fellowship with such a creature.

The following had to happen in order to address man's condition so that God might have fellowship with him, as Ezekiel 16 teaches:

1) Man had to be made alive.

And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live (Eze. 16:6).

2) Man had to be washed.

Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil (Eze. 16:9).

3) Man had to become beautiful again.

And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God (Eze. 16:14).

These three wonders are called regeneration, (spiritual) baptism and grace. All come to us in Jesus Christ and through His cross only. Grace is the beauty of God with which He clothes us. It is a communicable attribute and stems from God's own perfection of beauty. It makes a man a partaker of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). It is the reason why, when we awake from death, we will be in His likeness (Ps. 17:18).

Is there any possibility of this grace of God being common to all men? No way. The elect church's prayer is,

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it (Ps. 90:17).