



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 5:20-21

"Human Salvation by Sovereign Grace"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This morning we are turning again to Romans chapter 5 and we are reading to two verses. And then we will turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and read a few verses there as well for our Scripture reading. Romans chapter 5 verses 20 and 21. You may remember that in two of our precious studies we have referred to Romans chapter 5 quite fully. There is, however, a section of the epistle that bears on the topic for today which is "Human Salvation by Sovereign Grace". And so we're reading verses 20 and 21. And the apostle writes here answering a natural question that might arise. Because you see, he's been setting out how Jesus Christ and how Adam are similar and also how they're different. They are similar, as we have pointed out, in the fact that they both are representative men; covenantal heads. Adam, the covenantal head of all people. Christ, the covenantal head of the people of God.

Now, we have argued that that is the most gracious way in which God could have carried out his relationship with men. I never found a more gracious way by which God may have dealt with us. He dealt with us by the covenantal head of Adam and Christ. And as a result of the fact that we all feel in Adam it's possible for us to find redemption in the saving work of Christ. And so Paul spells out the relationship between the first

Adam and the last Adam. They are largely different, but in one respect, that respect, they are similar. They both are covenantal heads.

Otherwise they are different. From Adam we are guilty sinners under condemnation. From Christ we receive righteousness, life, justification. So all of the things that we lose in one sense are gained through the last Adam. But they are alike in that one respect that they both are covenantal heads.

Now someone at this point might, listening to Paul, say, "Now, you act as if everything depends upon our relationship to the two men; Adam and Christ. But is not most of the Old Testament devoted to the period of time when the nation Israel was under law? What is the relationship of the Law of Moses to this scheme of covenantal representation?" So the apostle answers that question in verses 20 and 21 of chapter 5. He says, "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound" In other words, the law had a pedagogical use. It was designed to cause the sin that exists in man's nature to abound in outward trespasses so he would be brought to conviction of his sin and thus turn to God for deliverance through the last Adam. But Paul goes on to say, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound that just as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness." I'd like for you underline those words in your thinking, "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," because we'll try to emphasize that in the message that follows.

Now, turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 through verse 6 to one of those famous passages to which the apostle also speaks of sovereign grace. The apostle writes in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Now, please notice that particular phrase, "according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the glory of His

grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful and thankful for the privilege that is ours today. We thank Thee of the word of God and for the way in which it ministers to us in the hand so the Holy Spirit. May the spirit and the word bear fruit in our lives as we listen and ponder the things that Thou hast written through the apostles and the prophets, and given through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful and thankful for the way in which the word of God has ministered to us. And we pray, Lord, that it may continue to have its ministry to the building up of the saints and to the saving of the lost.

We commit to Thee the ministry of the word today wherever it goes forth, not simply in Believers Chapel. But wherever the word of God goes forth may, Lord, Thy blessing attend it with fruitfulness. We pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ and we pray for this church, for its elders, and for its deacons, and members, and friends. And we ask Thy blessing upon the visitors who are with us today.

We pray for our country. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon it. Protect and keep us, and give us the freedom to proclaim the riches of divine grace through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

We especially also, Lord, remember those who are passing through experiences that are very unpleasant, and trying, and difficult. And we pray for those whose names are in our calendar of concern. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt minister to them. Give comfort, and strength, and wisdom, and guidance. And in accordance with Thy will give healing. Minister through the physicians in a marvelous way. Lord, we realize that Thou art in control of all of the affairs of our lives, even the little details, and we can turn to Thee and know that as the Scriptures say that Thou hast brought to our understanding through the spirit and through the apostle that, "All things work together for good to those

who love Thee who are called according to Thy purpose." May, Lord, we realize and understand and experience those marvelous truths.

We commit this meeting to Thee. We pray that it may, in the light of the eternity that is perhaps soon to come, that it may be a fruitful hour. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the fifth of our series of studies in what we have very simply called "The Eight Most Important Christian Truths". As I think about the eight most important Christian truths one can only say, "Well, this is the way that I feel about that at the present time." But one of the reasons that I picked out these, because surely there are many, many, many important Christian truths, is because these often are so neglected in the day in which we live; "Divine Revelation in Scripture", Divine Creation", The Fall of Man and Human Inability", Divine Redemption by Covenantal Representative". I dare say, if you were here two weeks ago, that may have been the only message that you have ever heard on the topic "Divine Redemption by a Covenant Representative". As far as I know, and I've been listening to preachers for a long time, I had actually never heard a message specifically on that topic in which the author sought to defend covenantal representation. But it undergirds the whole of the Bible and accounts for a great deal of the ignorance of Holy Scripture that exists in our midst and in our thinking.

Well, today the subject is "Sovereign Grace", or "Human Salvation by Sovereign Grace". And of course we're all familiar, if we've been around a Christian church very long, with salvation by grace. But the adjective "sovereign" is the think that makes it different; "Human Salvation by Sovereign Grace", surely, one of the most important of all doctrines and one of the most misunderstood.

Just this past week in reading a book written two hundred years ago on the subject of "The Grace of God", the author began his discussion by saying, "The gospel of reigning grace, being a doctrine truly divine, has ever been the object of the world's contempt." Well, it is truly divine. There is no question about that. If we read the Bible

we could not help but see it. Now, of course, it's possible that you may have grown up in an environment in which the Bible was opened and you were given a different interpretation of biblical truth. It's very possible that you have not been exposed to sovereign grace. But it surely is a neglected doctrine and when it is proclaimed, as far as the world is concerned, it has been the object of the world's contempt; the idea of sovereign grace.

Now, the purpose of this message is to center upon the principle ways in which grace is sovereign in our salvation. Now, I'll seek to show that God loves in sovereign grace, that God elects in sovereign grace, that God calls in sovereign grace, that God justifies in sovereign grace, that God adopts in sovereign grace, that he sanctifies in sovereign grace, and that he perseveres in sovereign grace. Now, I know you may think that I'll never be able to get through seven points; you have trouble getting through three. [Laughter] Well, we shall see. And you may be right; I hope not.

Now, we should ask a question right at the beginning, "What is grace?" And "What does the term sovereign mean?" To put it very simply, grace is God's free electing covenantal love for the rebellious. The apostle puts it plainly in Romans chapter 4 verse 4 and 5 in which he says these words, "Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Sermons use the term grace constantly. Even people who don't believe in the biblical doctrine of grace uses the term grace. When we talk about the sacraments or the ordinance, the term grace is frequently used. When we pray we frequently use the term grace. But we sometimes forget that only God exercises grace.

Jim Packer, in one of his works, says "To many the term grace suggests only vague notions of a celestial battery charge administered through the sacraments." Grace, in large bodies of professing Christians, the term grace signifies precisely that; a way in which God gives us a battery charge, a spiritual battery charge through the ordinance, through the

sacraments. Now that, of course, is a far cry from what is meant by the biblical term of grace. It's God's free, electing, covenantal love for rebellious men. And if you want to define rebellious men, that means "all of us".

Now, what about sovereign? What does that mean? Well, when we attach sovereign to grace we are referring to supreme, unlimited, all conquering power by which grace always attains it's goals. So we are thinking about invincible grace. We are talking about grace that cannot be frustrated in its purposes. We are talking about many passages in the word of God that express the fact that when God attempts or designs to do something he accomplishes it always. He never fails.

He's the supreme omnipotent being. Listen to what he says through the Prophet Isaiah. "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass. And as I have purposed, so shall it stand." In the same chapter the prophet says, "For the Lord God of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it. And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" In another one of the prophecies of the Old Testament the prophet writes these words, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And he (God), he doseth according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

So what we're talking about is a term that means the supreme, unlimited, all conquering power of God by which he attains his goals always, unrestrictedly, evincingly attains his goals; sovereign grace.

Now, God loves in sovereign grace. I'm turning to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13. This is one of a number of passages, but we haven't turned to this one in a good while and so I'll read it. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and I'll read 14, too. That won't hurt us.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our God to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, notice the expression, "brethren, beloved of the Lord". The very fact that the apostle says that the Thessalonians have been loved of God is evidence of his sovereign grace toward them. In fact, it's in the nature of love to be sovereign. No one can explain why a person loves another person. If you can find some good practical pragmatic reasons why you love your wife you probably don't really love her. Well, you might like to have her as your wife because she might be very useful to you, but if you really love her you'll love her in spite of the ways in which she's not useful to you. [Laughter] Love is sovereign. You cannot explain it. Just look around at the people who love other people and you will see, "How can he love her?" Or vice versa more often, "How could she love him?" [Laughter] There is no way in which you can explain love because it's sovereign. It just happens. It's there.

Now, in the scriptures when we asked why God elected some people the Bible has one simple answer and the simple answer is an answer beyond which, or behind which, we cannot go. It's, "God loved us." now, that love is a love of sovereign grace. It's the love of a God who loves sovereignly and secures us for himself. He secures us for himself by the other administrations that accompany his love and his divine election. And as we look at this love of God, it's obvious that some are loved sovereign and some are not. In fact, that Bible states that. It says, "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated."

Now, God did not have personal animosity towards Esau. As a matter of fact, he blessed Esau. But those terms love and hate are terms in the context that speak of divine election. Jacob was the one through whom the promised redeemer would come and Esau was not. Esau sold his birthright. He didn't realize all that he was doing. And as

we said two weeks ago, he not only influenced his future but the future of all of those who were in him. So we say concerning divine love, "It's distinguishing. It makes distinctions among people. You cannot explain it." We have to leave that with the Lord God. We know this.

Secondly, it is effectual. As we say, "It's sovereign love." It's effectual. It reaches the ones for whom it is intended. And finally, and this forgotten in our day particularly, it is righteous love. It's not the kind of love that could be called simply sentimentality. It's not the kind of love expressed by the bumper simple "Smile, God loves you." That actually is a maligning of the God of holy Scripture.

It's imperative, I think, that the biblical view of God's love in our day be boldly declared, The most tragic theological error of our day is the belief the love is the chief attribute of God. Now, of course, the Bible does say "God is love," but that has come to be turned around in our thinking so that many people really think the Bible says, "Love is God." But when the Bible says, "God is love," there is a special kind of meaning attached to that term. And so unfortunately, "Smile, God loves you," is not a scriptural idea at all, although it is thought to be. And as a matter of fact, if one in our day denies that, he is thought to be denying the teaching that is ultimately, surely the teaching of the word of God. But the oversimplification of "God is love," has resulted in a dislike for the doctrine of the word of God in general, and a dislike of those passages, one of which I just referred to, "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated." A simple system of biblical doctrine built on the oversimplification of the God of love leads ultimately to an affinity to what we would call theological liberalism, that God loves everybody the same way. Scriptures do not teach that anywhere in all of the word of God.

Now, there are certain blessings that come to men and come to all men. God exercises common grace to all men. He ministers to them in ways that could be called divine blessing. But when we talk about sovereign love we are talking about something that pertains to a particular people; the people of God. Let us not forget that God is love



and the same book that tells us God is love is the book that tells us God is light, and God is righteous. So God loves in sovereign grace.

Secondly, God elects in sovereign grace. The passage we read in our Scripture reading is Ephesians 1 verse 3 through verse 6. Listen to what Paul says here,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings and heavenly places in Christ according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will."

God elects in sovereign grace.

There are three theories about God's election. I've spoken about this many times so I'll just sum them up for you. There are those, unfortunately, who believe that God loves those who do that which is right. He loves those who perform good works. Now, of course, if you read the Bible it's not long before you run across denials of this. The Scriptures say, "A man is saved not through the works that he performs but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ on the principle of grace, for by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." So to say that God elects the good, and defining good by human standards is again to go contrary to the divine word.

Among Christians there are two theories that often compete with one another. One of them is that God chooses men on the basis of the faith that he sees that they will exercise. And so the picture is usually presented of a God who foresees the individuals who, hearing the word of God, will respond in faith. And he then chooses those whom he foresees will believe. Now, if you just think for a moment you'll see that cannot be true. In the first place, the kind of God who can look down through the centuries and

gain in knowledge is not the God of all knowledge. He's a God who increases in knowledge and being a God who increases in knowledge he cannot be the true God who is omniscient. Furthermore, if he should look down through the years and see who will believe, and mind you God is able to do that, what would be the point of foreordaining them to the relationship with him? If he sees that they're going to believe in him there is no point in foreordaining them to salvation. So in other words, if we think about that theory a bit and many other things that we can say about it in the lots of fine points that we would not to talk about, but you can see that that is contrary to the word of God. God does not gain in knowledge. He has all knowledge. The reason that God knows who will believe and who will not believe is because of his ultimate foreordination of those who shall believe.

Now, if you think that is unfair let us remember that everybody deserves eternal hellfire and condemnation. And so for God to exercise his sovereign grace toward some is manifestation of his sovereign grace. To leave others in their condition in which they stand rebellious toward him and to his word cannot be a matter by which we should blame God. He loves his sin. He persists in sin. And even when he hears the Gospel preached, as I am preaching it to you right now, he rebels against that. And so when God offers the salvation to all men through his preachers he doesn't respond. He doesn't want to respond. And he's left in his condition of rebellion.

Then if that is not true then we must believe what the apostle says. He says that, "We are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." And, "We are predestined unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." So men are elected, not because they are good, not because God sees that they will believe, but they are elected according to the good pleasure of his will. To put it another way, by divine sovereign grace. That's what Scripture says. It says it plainly. It says it over and over again. And if you want to know who the strongest propagator of this doctrine is in the New Testament it's no secret. It's the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

That's where the apostles learned their lessons, from him as he interpreted the Holy Scriptures.

You know, there is a famous children's book written by C.S. Lewis called "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe". And Mr. Lewis pictures an animal world held in the merciless grip of the white witch of Narnia. She's cast a spell over the land, which has the unhappy of making it always winter but never Christmas. Mr. Lewis had magnificent gifts. Only when Aslan the lion and savior king appears and sacrifices himself does it emerge that there is a stronger power than that of the witch. There is what Lewis calls, and I'm quoting him, "The deeper magic from before the dawn of time." Deeper magic than the witch's magic. And listen to how he writes it. "But what does it all mean?" asks Susan when they were somewhat calmer. "It means that, Aslan, now though the witch knew the deep magic there is a magic deeper still which she didn't know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back into the stillness and darkness before time dawned she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack and (listen to these words) death itself would start working backwards."

It's not only the world of Narnia that deeper magic from before the dawn of time operates. In Scripture, as we read the word of God, we discover that eternal love existed before time and that eternal love was set upon you and me in the family of God. So election isn't sovereign grace. If you want another passage to put by the margin of Ephesians one take a look at 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 8 through verse 11.

But thirdly, God calls in sovereign grace. The apostle in Galatians chapter 1 and verse 6 says with reference to the Galatians, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of grace unto another Gospel." And then in verse 15 he says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace." God calls in sovereign grace. This is the divine summons to new life

through the gospel, God making the unwilling willing. We all are by nature unwilling, but God works in the hearts of the people of God and transforms their unwillingness into willingness in his own mysterious and secret way and brings us from our unwilling to willingness. The will that determines to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the will that has been determined by God.

Now, you can see from this that when we talk about the will we are therefore denying that there is such a thing as a free will. Paul states it very plainly. Remember? "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Now, if we believe that the will is free and that we must of ourselves make the initial decision to respond to the Lord God, it's no wonder if we really believe that that we would be devising all kinds of methods by which we might persuade men's wills. That's why Arminianism, about which I was speaking, tends to major on methods by which men can be persuaded. But if we really believed in the free grace of God, the sovereign grace of God, that God alone can change a heart and transform the will, then we can be driven by that to God himself through Christ and the ministry of the word of God in the spirit.

Now, that is why in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ there are often two different kinds of methods, one stressing human methods; human means of persuasion, alter calls, writing your name in books, raising your hands in meeting, singing thirty four verses of a hymn that has only about six and so on. [Laughter] All of those are reflections of certain theories concerning the way by which men come to God. But if you really think that salvation depends upon the Lord God and working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man then you look to the Lord God as you preach his gospel and in faith and trust you count upon him, according to his promises, to bring the word of God to bear upon men's hearts and wills and to make the unwilling willing in his own sovereign way.

That's why we don't have any alter call in Believers Chapel. When I go they may have one, but they don't have one now. [Laughter] And that's why we don't have you

raise your hand in the meeting. And that's why we don't have you sign a decision card. The only way in which you express your faith is to go to the elders and say, "Through the preaching of the word of God I have come to faith in Christ. I'd like to be baptized in water to give testimony as the Lord Jesus has asked believers to do." So if that's your experience and you've believed, go to one of the elders and say you'd like to be baptized in testimony to your faith.

Free grace alarms the careless sinner, lets him know he cannot believe anytime he wants to believe and it awakens the drowsy formalist who thinks because he's identified with the church that surely everything is going to be all right. No. God is not that kind of sentimentalist who is touched simply by sentimentalism. But the Gospel of the Lord Jesus is the most serious thing that a man could ever utter. And the time at which we respond is the time that the eternal God himself has determined should come to pass. Maybe this is the moment for you. Maybe this is the moment of your whole life to which you have come and it's your time to submit to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. I hope so.

Fourthly, God justifies in sovereign grace. In Romans chapter 3 and verse 24 and 25 the apostle states this very plainly. He says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God." Luther called justification by faith the article of a standing or falling church, that everything hinges upon the preaching of justification by faith apart from the works of the law.

What does it mean to be justified? Well, it means to be declared righteous by God. It does not mean to be righteous, for we are still sinners. It doesn't mean to be made righteous, for we are still sinners. But it means before the throne of God to be declared righteous on the basis of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. To put it according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and this is surely in harmony with the word of God, this is what it says, "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, not by

infusing righteousness into them (We might add through the sacraments, which is what they had in mind.) But by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone. Not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them. They receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God." That's good biblical doctrine true to the words of our Lord and his apostles. By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ we are declared righteous before the throne of God and possess the righteousness that satisfies him. What a magnificent thing that is.

William Cunningham used to say, and I've often said this in this audience, he said, "The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires him to require." And that's what everyone must have if he's to enter heaven; the righteousness of God. It's not a question of sentimentality. It's a question of, "Do you possess the righteousness of God?" And that is the gift of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ grounded in the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross.

The Lutheran R.C.H. Lenski in speaking about this expression "justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus", he says, "This is pure abounding astounding grace." And when we think of it we can sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds and these arrays with joy shall I lift up my head." Do you have that righteousness? Is it your possession? Can you say, "I have been justified by God through Jesus Christ,"?

Fifthly, God adopts in sovereign grace. Ephesians said that. Remember in verse 5 and verse 6, the apostle went on to say, after he spoke about divine election, he spoke about adoption. He said, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." So Christ propitiated the holiness of God and on the ground of that men received

life, which expresses itself in faith. And then they are declared just by God and adopted into the family of God. Now mind you, all of the people of God are *dei urei* -- sons of God, before they come to faith in Christ. That is, they have all ready been made heirs, but they haven't experienced it yet. In fact, it's very much like heirship here. There are people sitting in this audience that are all ready heirs. Somebody has written a will, and the will has been dully recorded and legally they are heirs. But they don't have a thing. *Dei urei* -- they're heirs. But the time will come when they will be *de facto* heirs and they'll receive the material benefits of that.

Now, the Lord Jesus speaks of the people of God before they come to know him. He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring." They're sheep. God said to Paul, "Before they had come I have much people in this city, so go on and preach the word of God." The Lord Jesus speaks about those whom the Father has given to him. It's possible someone has not even been born yet who has all ready been given by God the Father to the Son. And let me assure you, they will come both into existence and into the knowledge of the Lord. We are his children. And we, as a result, have his nature in part. We have his name. We are called sons of God, not Johnson, but sons of God. Time will come when I won't have to bear the burden of the name Johnson. [Laughter] Son of God. How marvelous. I wouldn't swap it for Rockefeller. Who would? We have the Holy Spirit and we have assurance of divine love.

Sixthly, God sanctifies in sovereign grace. There is a marvelous passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18 in which we read this, "but we all with open face beholding us in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord." Or to put it in another way, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." And so we are assured through the word of God that sanctification, which is by the word of God and through the ordinances and the example of life, is a work that is sure to be

accomplished. And in fact, glorification to which we look forward is the ultimate proof of the completion of divine sanctification.

And my dear friends, if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and you belong to him the time is coming when they'll be a tremendous improvement both in your body and in your being. You will be like him. Much easier to get along with, too. You will be like him. And that procedure is going on right at the present time. "Every time you open up the word of God," Paul says, "and you gaze upon the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as expressed in it you are experiencing the transformation from glory to glory."

I love that old story that Hawthorne told about the little boy who kept looking at the great stone face. Some of you, no doubt, have been to that mountain and you have seen the great stone face. But this young boy in New England heard a legend that there would some day come to their little village someone who looked like the great stone face, and the village would be blessed by it. And so as a little child he would go out and sit and look at the great stone face, that mountain image. And as a young man he continued to do the same. As the years went by he still was entranced by the great stone face. And even after he became a mature man he would go out, living in the same community, and look at the great stone face and meditate and remember the legend about the individual who would come looking like the great stone face and be a blessing to the community. Even as a man of middle age, thirty five, he still looked at the great stone face. And as an old man he still was looking at the great stone face until one day he walked into the village and one of the kids looked up at him and said, "Look, the great stone face has come." [Laughter] And of course, I guess the point of it that Hawthorne and others had wanted to make about it, and surely Bible teachers have, is that when we look at someone we generally take on their characteristics.

I'm sorry ladies, but it's true. Psychologically, experiments have been made of brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives, and it has been shown scientifically that people who have lived together as husband and wife look more like those who are



brothers and sisters. Now the ladies, I'm sorry to have ruined your morning. [Laughter] But nevertheless, it's true. That assimilation does take place and, of course, it illustrates the biblical truth that if you spend time in the word of God you can be sure of this, that it will manifest itself in your life.

And finally, number seven. God perseveres in sovereign grace. Listen to just a few of the many many passages in the word of God that might support this. John 6 verse 37 through verse 39 reads like this, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Verse 65, he says, "No one can come who's not given, and him that cometh to me I will in nowhere cast out for I came down from Heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me." What is this will? Well, he tells us what it is. He says, "This is the Father's will, which hath sent me that of all which He hath given me I shall lose nothing (And should raise it up again at the last day.) And this is the will of Him that sent me that everyone seeth the Son the believeth on Him, they have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day." In other words, those who believe will be raised up. Those who are given by the Father, and they are the same, shall be raised up at the last day. God perseveres in his sovereign grace and he saves all of his saints exactly as he intended to do.

As Jesus said in chapter 10, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand." Hallelujah. What a Savior.

Paul's doctrine of free and sovereign grace both humbles the pride of the self-righteous legalist, he tells him he cannot be saved by what he does, and also it condemns the lazy, irresponsible, laxity of the antinomian who believes that he can believe anytime he wants to. Both of those are errors that humanly speaking often lead to eternal perdition. Invincible grace, however, is through righteousness. Let's not forget that.

"Smile, God loves you," is a theology that maligns God and reproaches the Lord Jesus Christ. And it leads to dislike of biblical doctrine and an affinity to modernism.

Let me make one final point. When we say grace reigns we're talking about sovereign grace. And when we say grace reigns through righteousness we are saying something that is exceedingly important. For example, if a man owes another man a hundred dollars and the creditor says, "Forget it. Let's not talk about it again," the debt's canceled. Someone standing by might say, "That's an act of pure grace." But in Bible language it's not because the righteous requirements of the law of God are overlooked. That isn't the way God forgives. In a divine sense forgiveness of a debt is not grace. Tearing up a note is not grace. Remission of penalty is not grace. The pardon of criminal is not grace. For a governor to give clemency to someone who is guilty and who hasn't paid his debt is not grace. To teach that God forgives sin because of great heartedness is to pervert the doctrine of grace. To teach that God exercises clemency as a governor, issues a pardon, is likewise a perversion. Such teaching detracts from the work of Jesus Christ by which he paid the debt. Let me say to you, your forgiveness, your justification, the pardon that you have received, is not a pardon in which God diminishes the eternal requirements of his divine justice. When you are pardoned you are pardoned justly. You are pardoned righteously. You are pardoned because your debt has been paid by your substitute. And when you stand at the gates of Heaven, symbolically speaking, and when Peter is there, very symbolically speaking [Laughter], to see who will enter in and if he should question you, you have the right to say, "Step aside, Mr. Peter. I have title to residence in Heaven because my substitute has paid my debt. I am righteously the possessor of a pardon."

Well, you might say, "Well, where then does grace come into our salvation?" Why it came into our salvation in a very important way. It was grace on God's part to give the substitute. It was grace for him to give the substitute, but the forgiveness, the pardon, the justification is the righteous accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we do not

preach the Gospel in that way we have preached a Gospel that is a reproach to a holy God and is a reproach to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in effect says that what he did doesn't really bear directly upon the forgiveness of a person. And God may forget it all and just extend free pardon as a sentimental, "Smile, God loves you," kind of God. That is far from the teaching of Holy Scripture.

If you're in the audience this morning you may be saved and saved righteously through the Lord Jesus Christ's blood shed on Calvary's cross, declared righteous righteously by God. Grace reigns through righteousness. And that program by which you may righteously stand before the Lord God is the work of a God who in grace gave the substitute to take our place.

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, come to him. Believe in him. Receive his salvation. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful indeed for human salvation by divine grace. How marvelous it is to know that Thou hast dealt with us in such a way. We praise Thee. We give Thee thanks. And if there should be someone here who at this very moment does not have the assurance of justification, may their heart lift toward Thee with the prayer, "O God, I know I'm a sinner. I see Christ died for sinners, and by Thy grace I receive the gift he offers." O Lord, may it be so in the hearts of some in this meeting. For Jesus' sake. Amen.