

## CHAPTER 8

### PROOF THAT THIS GRACE IS FREE AND UNCHANGEABLE

THUS I have showed you in particular, that the Covenant of Grace of God is free and unchangeable to men — that is, in that it hath been obtained for men, and that perfectly, to the satisfying of justice, and taking all things out of the way that were any ways a hindrance to our salvation (<sup>5024</sup>Colossians 2:14).

The second thing for the discovering of this freeness and constancy of the Covenant of Grace of God is manifested thus —

*First.* Whatsoever any man hath of the grace of God, he hath it as a free gift of God through Christ Jesus the Mediator of this covenant, even when they are in a state of enmity to Him, whether it be Christ as the foundation-stone, or faith to lay hold of Him, mark that (<sup>488</sup>Romans 5:8, 9; <sup>502</sup>Colossians 1:21, 22). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves,” not for anything in you, or done by you for the purchasing of it, but “it is the gift of God,” (<sup>488</sup>Ephesians 2:8) and that bestowed on you, even when ye “were dead in trespasses and sins” (<sup>488</sup>Ephesians 2:1, 9). Nay, if thou hast so much as one desire that is right, it is the gift of God; for of ourselves, saith the Apostle, we are not able to speak a good word, or think a good thought (<sup>486</sup>2 Corinthians 3:5).

Was it not grace, absolute grace, that God made promise to Adam after transgression? (<sup>485</sup>Genesis 3:15). Was it not free grace in God to save such a wretch as Manasseh was, who used enchantments, witchcraft, burnt his children in the fire, and wrought much evil? (<sup>483</sup>2 Chronicles 33). Was it not free grace to save such as those were that are spoken of in the 16th of Ezekiel, which no eye pitied? Was it not free grace for Christ to give Peter a loving look after he had cursed, and swore, and denied Him? Was it not free grace that met Paul when he was agoing to Damascus to persecute, which converted him, and made him a vessel of mercy?

And what shall I say of such that are spoken of in <sup><400></sup>1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, speaking there of fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, the basest of sinners in the world, and yet were washed, and yet were justified; was it not freely by grace? O saints, you that are in heaven cry out, “We came hither by grace; and you that are on the earth, I am sure you cry, If ever we do go thither, it must be freely by grace!”

**Second.** In the next place, it appears to be unchangeable in this —

1. Because justice being once satisfied doth not use to call for the debt again. No; let never such a sinner come to Jesus Christ, and so to God by Him, and justice, instead of speaking against the salvation of that sinner, it will say, I am just as well as faithful to forgive him his sins (<sup><600></sup>1 John 1:9). When justice itself is pleased with a man, and speaks on his side, instead of speaking against him, we may well cry out, Who shall condemn?
2. Because there is no law to come in against the sinner that believes in Jesus Christ; for he is not under that, and that by right comes in against none but those that are under it. But believers are not under that — that is, not their Lord, therefore that hath nothing to do with them; and besides, Christ’s blood hath not only taken away the curse thereof, but also He hath in His own Person completely fulfilled it as a public Person in our stead. (<sup><400></sup>Romans 7:1-4).
3. The devil that accused them is destroyed (<sup><504></sup>Hebrews 2:14,15).
4. Death, and the grave, and Hell are overcome (<sup><455></sup>1 Corinthians 15:55; <sup><234></sup>Hosea 13:14).
5. Sin, that great enemy of man’s salvation, that is washed away (<sup><600></sup>Revelation 1:5).
6. The righteousness of God is put upon them that believe, and given to them, and they are found in it (<sup><108></sup>Philippians 3:8-10; <sup><482></sup>Romans 3:22).
7. Christ is always in Heaven to plead for them, and to prepare a place for them (<sup><5024></sup>Hebrews 7:24; <sup><441></sup>John 14:1-4).

**8.** He hath not only promised that He will not leave us, nor forsake us, but He hath also sworn to fulfill His promises. O rich grace! O free grace! Lord, who desired Thee to promise? who compelled Thee to swear? We use to take honest men upon their bare word, but God, “willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel,” hath “confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things,” His promise and His oath, “in which it was impossible for God to lie,” or break either of them, “we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (<sup>3667</sup>Hebrews 6:17-18). I will warrant you, God will never break His oath; therefore we may well have good ground to hope from such a good foundation as this, that God will never leave us indeed. Amen.

*Third.* Not only thus, but,

- 1.** God hath begotten believers again to Himself, to be His adopted and accepted children, in and through the Lord Jesus (<sup>4068</sup>1 Peter 1:3).
- 2.** God hath prepared a kingdom for them before the foundation of the world, through Jesus Christ (<sup>4234</sup>Matthew 25:34).
- 3.** He hath given them an earnest of their happiness while they live here in this world. “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory,” and that through this Jesus (<sup>4013</sup>Ephesians 1:13, 14).
- 4.** If His children sin through weakness, or by sudden temptation, they confessing of it, He willingly forgives, and heals all their wounds, reneweth His love towards them, waits to do them good, casteth their sins into the depths of the sea, and all this freely, without any work done by men as men — Not for your own sakes do I do this, O house of Israel, be it known unto you, saith the Lord, but wholly and alone by the blood of Jesus (<sup>4323</sup>Ezekiel 36:23, 23).
- 5.** In a word, if you would see it altogether, God’s love was the cause why Jesus Christ was sent to bleed for sinners. Jesus Christ’s bleeding stops the cries of Divine justice; God looks upon them as complete in Him, gives them to Him as His by right of purchase. Jesus ever lives to

pray for them that are thus given unto Him. God sends His Holy Spirit into them to reveal this to them, sends His angels to minister for them; and all this by virtue of an Everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son. Thrice happy are the people that are in such a case!

Nay, further, He hath made them brethren with Jesus Christ, members of His flesh and of His bones, the spouse of this Lord Jesus; and all to show you how dearly, how really, how constantly He loveth us, who, by faith of His operation, have laid hold upon Him.

I shall now lay down a few arguments for the superabundant clearing of it, and afterwards answer two or three objections that may be made against it, and so I shall fall upon the next thing.

**First.** God loves the saints as He loves Jesus Christ; and God loves Jesus Christ with an eternal love; therefore the saints also with the same.

“Thou hast loved them as Thou has loved Me”

(<sup>John 17:23</sup> John 17:23).

**Second.** That love which is God Himself, must needs be everlasting love; and that is the love wherewith God hath loved His saints in Christ Jesus; therefore His love towards His children in Christ must needs be an everlasting love. There is none dare say that the love of God is mixed with a created mixture; if not, then it must needs be Himself (<sup>John 4:16</sup> John 4:16).

**Third.** That love which is always pitched upon us, in an object as holy as God, must needs be an everlasting love. Now the love of God was and is pitched upon us, through an object as holy as God Himself, even our Lord Jesus; therefore it must needs be unchangeable.

**Fourth.** If He with whom the Covenant of Grace was made, did in every thing and condition do even what the Lord could desire or require of Him, that His love might be extended to us, and that for ever, then His love must needs be an everlasting love, seeing everything required of us was completely accomplished for us by Him; and all this hath our Lord Jesus done, and that most gloriously, even on our behalf; therefore it must needs be a love that lasts for ever and ever.

**Fifth.** If God hath declared Himself to be the God that changeth not, and hath sworn to be immutable in His promise, then surely He will be unchangeable; and He hath done so; therefore it is impossible for God to lie, and so for His eternal love to be changeable (<sup>SC13</sup> Hebrews 6:13-18). Here is an argument of the Spirit's own making! Who can contradict it? If any object, and say, But still it is upon the condition of believing — I answer, The condition also is His own free gift, and not a qualification arising from the stock of nature (<sup>EPH</sup> Ephesians 2:8; <sup>PHI</sup> Philippians 1:28, 29). So that here is the love unchangeable; here is also the condition given by Him whose love is unchangeable, which may serve yet further for a strong argument that God will have His love unchangeable. Sinner, this is better felt and enjoyed than talked of.

**Objection** First. But if this love of God be unchangeable in itself, yet it is not unchangeably set upon the saints unless they behave themselves the better. [The first objection].

**Answer.** As God's love at the first was bestowed upon the saints without anything foreseen by the Lord in them, as done by them, <sup>DEU</sup> Deuteronomy 9:4-6, so He goeth on with the same, Saying,

“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”  
(<sup>HEB</sup> Hebrews 13:5).

**Objection** Second. But how cometh it to pass then, that many fall off again from the grace of the Gospel, after a profession of it for some time; some to delusions, and some to their own sins again? [The second objection].

**Answer.** They are all fallen away, not from the everlasting love of God to them, but from the profession of the love of God to them. Men may profess that God loves them when there is no such matter, and that they are the children of God, when the devil is their father; as it is in <sup>JOH</sup> John 8:40-44. Therefore they that do finally fall away from a profession of the grace of the Gospel, it is, first, because they are bastards and not sons. Secondly, because as they are not sons, so God suffereth them to fall, to make it appear that they are not sons, not of the household of God — “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of

us, they would no doubt,” mark that, “no doubt,” saith he, “they would have continued with us: but they went out,” from us,

“that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”  
(<sup>4120</sup>1 John 2:19).

And though Hymeneus and Philetus do throw themselves headlong to Hell,

“nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His”  
(<sup>4121</sup>2 Timothy 2:17-19).

**Objection** Third. But the Scripture saith that there are some that had faith, yet lost it, and have made shipwreck of it. [The third objection]. Now God loves no longer than they believe, as is evident; for “he that believeth not shall be damned.” So then, if some may have faith, and yet lose it, and so lose the love of God because they have lost their faith, it is evident that God’s love is not so immutable as you say it is to every one that believeth.

**Answer.** There are more sorts of faith than one that are spoken of in Scripture —

1. There is a faith that man may have, and yet be nothing, none of the saints of God, and yet may do great things therewith (<sup>4122</sup>1 Corinthians 13:1-4).
2. There is a faith that was wrought merely by the operation of the miracles that were done in those days by Christ and his followers — “And many of the people believed in Him.” How came they by their faith? Why, by the operation of the miracles that He did among them; for said they,

“When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” (<sup>4123</sup>John 7:31).

The great thing that wrought their faith in them, was only by seeing the miracles that He did, <sup>4124</sup>John 2:23, which is not that saving faith which is called the faith of God’s elect, as is evident; for there must not be only miracles wrought upon outward objects to beget that — that being too

weak a thing — but it must be by the same power that was stretched out in raising Christ from the dead; yea, the exceeding greatness of that power (<sup>4018</sup>Ephesians 1:18, 19). So there is a believing, being taken with some marvelous work, visibly appearing to the outward sense of seeing; and there is a believing that is wrought in the heart by an invisible operation of the Spirit, revealing the certainty of the satisfaction of the merits of Christ to the soul in a more glorious way, both for certainty and for durableness, both as to the promise and the constancy of it (<sup>4167</sup>Matthew 16:17, 18).

**3.** There is a faith of a man's own, of a man's self also; but the faith of the operation of God, in Scripture, is set in opposition to that, for, saith He, you are saved by grace, "through faith, and that not of yourselves," of your own making, but that which is the free gift of God (<sup>4018</sup>Ephesians 2:8).

**4.** We say there is an historical faith — that is, such as is begotten by the co-operation of the Spirit with the Word.

**5.** We say there is a traditional faith — that is, to believe things by tradition, because others say they believe them; this is received by tradition, not by revelation, and shall never be able to stand, neither at the day of death, nor at the day of judgment; though possibly men, while they live here, may esteem themselves and states to be very good, because their heads are filled full of it.

**6.** There is a faith that is called in Scripture a dead faith, the faith of devils, or of the devil; they also that have only this, they are like the devil, and as sure to be damned as he, notwithstanding their faith, if they get no better into their hearts; for it is far off from enabling of them to lay hold of Jesus Christ, and so to put Him on for eternal life and sanctification, which they must do if ever they be saved (<sup>4026</sup>James 2:19, 26).

But all these are short of the saving faith of God's elect, as is manifest; I say, first, Because these may be wrought, and not by that power so exceedingly stretched forth. Secondly, Because these are wrought, partly,

**(1.)** By the sense of seeing — namely, the miracles — not by hearing; and,

(2.) The rest is wrought by a traditional or historical influence of the words in their heads, not by a heavenly, invisible, almighty, and saving operation of the Spirit of God in their hearts.

7. I do suppose also that there is a faith that is wrought upon men through the influence of those gifts and abilities that God gives sometimes to those that are not His own by election, though by creation; my meaning is, some men, finding that God hath given them very great gifts and abilities, — as to the gifts of preaching, praying, working miracles, or the like — I say, therefore do conclude that God is their Father, and they are His children; the ground of which confidence is still begotten, not by the glorious operation of the Spirit, but by a considering of the great gifts that God hath bestowed upon them as to the things before-mentioned. As thus,

(1.) the poor soul considers how ignorant it was, and now how knowing it is.

(2.) Considering how vain it formerly was, and also now how civil it is, presently makes this conclusion —

Surely God loves me, surely He hath made me one of His, and will save me. This is now a wrong faith, as is evident, in that it is placed upon a wrong object; for mark, this faith is not placed assuredly on God's grace alone, through the blood and merits of Christ being discovered effectually to the soul, but upon God through those things that God hath given it, as of gifts, either to preach, or pray, or do great works, or the like, which will assuredly come to nought as sure as God is in Heaven, if no better faith and ground of faith be found out for thy soul savingly to rest upon.

As to the second clause of the objection, which runs to this effect, God loves men upon the account of their believing, I answer, that God loves men before they believe; He loves them, He calls them, and gives them faith to believe — “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,” when? when we believed, or before? “even when we were dead in sins,” and so, far off from believers, “hath quickened us together with” Christ, “by grace ye are saved” (~~CHR~~ Ephesians 2:4, 5).

Now, also, I suppose that thou wilt say in thy heart, I would you would show us then what is saving faith; which thing it may be I may touch upon

a while hence, in the next thing that I am to speak unto. O they that have that are safe indeed!