

VI. GOD'S GRACIOUS PREVENTION AND ALLEVIATION OF SOME SUFFERING

To this point the emphasis has mainly been on God's perfect justice in inflicting suffering on violators of His perfect Law. Now we shift the emphasis from God's perfect justice to God's perfect grace, from God's infliction of suffering on deserving sinners to God's gracious gifts of mercy and benevolence and love to undeserving sinners.

This brings to the forefront the biblical motif of GRACE.

GRACE! God's undeserved, unearned, and unmerited favor toward the ungodly and the unrighteous!

GRACE! God's sovereign, free gift of mercy and kindness and love to those who richly deserve condemnation and death!

GRACE! Everything for nothing to those who deserve the exact opposite!

One reason for the strong emphasis on God's justice to this point is that the many-faceted jewel of God's grace can be grasped and fully appreciated only against the more somber tapestry of God's justice.

Think of it! Justice dictates that human beings should receive exactly what they deserve – no more and no less. That is strict justice. And what do sinners who have rejected God's truth and rebelled against God's Law deserve? Why, they deserve spiritual and physical death and immediate consignment to everlasting destruction! But what do they get? They get God's grace!

What calls forth God's grace? The answer is God's sovereign love. But does God's love ignore His justice? If justice demands the death and everlasting destruction of sinful mankind, does God suppress this demand of justice or lay it aside? Could He do so and remain righteous? (this is another way of asking whether He could do so and remain God) The answer is NO!

God's marvelous love did not ignore the demands of justice, but found a way to fully satisfy those demands and at the same time reach out to sinful man in mercy. Love found a way – the way of GRACE (that marvelous grace of our loving Lord that is greater than all our sin!)

Grace reconciles justice and mercy. God's sovereign love provides this way of grace by which His justice can be satisfied and His mercy can be extended.

God's sovereign love sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to fully satisfy all of the demands of God's Law, so that God could be just and at the same time extend His mercy to sinful mankind.

The atoning work of Christ is the basis on which God can be gracious. Although grace is always unmerited and unearned by sinners, it was fully merited and earned by Christ, so that mercy could be freely extended to sinful