

“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 34 – Sola Gratia – “The Sincere Offer of the Gospel”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on March 29th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

Read Matthew 11: 25-30 – “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I think You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’ “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take My Yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Here we see the free offer of the gospel being made to those who had been exposed to Christ’s teaching. In the verses which precede this invitation to come to Him, Jesus was rebuking the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. (verse 20-24) It is then that Christ thanks to His Father for hiding these things from those people who thought that they were wise in themselves; those who did not think that they needed to be saved from their sins. The reason that these things were hidden from those particular persons is given in verse 26 – “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” This is God’s sovereignty in salvation; on the one hand, His preterition, His choosing to pass by them in choosing them to eternal life. And on the other hand, His choosing to show electing love and mercy towards the unworthy and undeserving whom He does intend to save – “All things have been delivered to Me”, says Jesus, by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” How is the Father known? Through the Son, and how does the Son choose to reveal the Father to a sinful man? Through the gospel. Then comes the sincere and free offer of the gospel. “Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Not, “Come unto me all you who are self-righteous and proud and will not for a moment consider that you need My grace to be saved.” But come to Me all you who are truly seeking to know the meaning of life, and are desirous to find grace and favor and the forgiveness of sins which are only to be found in Me, says Christ. There is something to do when a person believes in Christ. It is not done to merit favor. It is done in order to find rest. It is to “take Christ’s yoke upon you, and learn from Him, for He is gentle and humble in heart.” See that you need to be joined to Christ savingly in order to please God. Then take Christ as your Savior and Lord, and you will find grace, mercy, peace, and blessing are found in Him. And you will find rest for your soul. No longer will you restlessly look elsewhere to find meaning and satisfaction. You will find the truth in Christ.

W. G.T. Shedd on The Sincere offer of the Gospel –

“It is objected to the doctrine of preterition, that God cannot be sincere in the universal offer of the gospel in Mark 16: 15 – “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

1. The first reply is: That sincerity depends upon the intrinsic nature of the thing desired, not upon the result of endeavors to attain it.” “A parent sincerely desire the reformation of a child, because his reformation is a good thing in itself.” “He may have little or no expectation of accomplishing it, but this does not weaken his longing, or impair the sincerity of his efforts.” “A miser upon his death-bed desires wealth as a species of good, as sincerely as ever, but he knows that he can no longer have it.” “In like manner, God, by reason of His inherent compassion, may

sincerely desire the conversion of a sinner, as the sinner's highest good, though he knows that it will never take place." P. 451 of Vol. 1 of Shedd's Dogmatic Theology

P. 454 – "God desires that the non-elect would turn of himself, by the spontaneous action of his own will under the operation of common grace. He would rejoice in such a conversion." "The entreaty, "Turn ye, why will ye die," springs out of this desire." "That this entreaty of God fails in this case is owing to the sinner, and therefore does not prove that God is insincere in His desire." "Sincerity, we have seen is independent of the result." "If the failure of this entreaty were due to God's own action, then, indeed, insincerity might be charged." "If God, at the time when he is entreating a man to turn, were at work to prevent him from turning, the entreaty would be hypocritical." "But God, instead of hindering the sinner, is helping him with that degree of grace which is called "common". The reason why the Divine entreaty thus accompanied with common grace, is unsuccessful, is the resistance of the sinner." "Surely, the fact that God does not think proper to add a second degree of grace to overcome the sinner's resistance of the first degree of grace, does not prove that God is insincere in His desire for the sinner's conversion under the first degree of grace." "If a man offer a beggar a small sum and it is rejected, it would be absurd to say that because he does not now offer him a large sum, he was insincere in the first offer. A parent wills the payment of a son's debts, in the sense of desiring that his son would by industry and economy pay the debts which he has contracted; but he may not will the payment of these debts in the sense of deciding to pay them for him; the reason being, that should he pay them he would do injustice to the other members of his family."

Conclusion: Let us see that the doctrine of Common Grace is very important to a right understanding of special and particular grace. It is important especially in relation to how we see God and how God does His work according to His purpose, which is that all that He does will tend to His own glory. We want to learn to see God as He portrays Himself in the Scriptures; as loving all men in a general sense; being kind and compassionate to poor and needy sinners, in that he sincerely in common grace desires their salvation. His free offer of salvation in His dear Son is held out to all mankind in order that they might believe and be saved. Therefore, let us not think lightly of this doctrine, but see to it that we become more like the perfect God that we serve, by being kind ourselves, and even learning to weep over the lost and perishing souls around us, and thinking of how we might win them to Christ.