

Saved By Grace – The Power and Purpose of God’s Exhaustive Providence

Introduction – Salvation is ‘*sola gratia*’. It is *by grace alone*. As simple as that gospel message is, its implications affect our understanding of every part of the work of God upon His creation to His glory. One of the most important aspects of biblical theology is that it turns us back to God; to a God-centered and God-glorifying mindset that brings true rest, true joy, true comfort, because we are studying God, the source of all these things.

To get to a discussion of God’s plan in the salvation of mankind, we ought to begin with a discussion of how God works in His creation generally. We will use the story of Ahab and the prophet he hated, Micaiah (1 Kings 22), to guide our study.

A Future Someone Knows (vv5-8) – In all times, men have tried to know the future. In this passage we see that Jehoshaphat assumed that God did know the future. There is a belief system today that claims that God does not know the future because there is no future to be known. Scripture declares quite the opposite. God knows all His works from eternity (Acts 15:18), and there is nothing in His creation disconnected from His works (Col 1:16-17, Heb 1:2-3). Prophecy is not about God’s great skills in prediction. God knows the future perfectly. Occasionally, He lets us in on some specifics. Not only will Peter deny the Lord; he will do so three times, and then a rooster will crow. Cyrus will be the name of the ruler who releases the Jews from exile. Judas will betray the Lord, and the number of pieces of silver is set. Micaiah knows God is never wrong (v 28).

God’s Relation to Time – God’s dwelling is eternity (Is 57:15). His house is forever. This is saying more than simply He has lived there a long time. The scriptures do not teach that from everlasting to everlasting He *was* and *will be* God, but that He *is* God (Ps 90:2). This is why God’s prophecies are perfect. Trying to grasp this is too high for us (Psalm 139:6), and we are warned that we cannot exhaustively comprehend it (Eccl 3:11).

The Things God Knows – In the midst of this story, we see the exhaustive knowledge and providence of God.

Evil Men and Wicked Angels (vv 19-23) – God directed the evil spirits and used them to direct the actions and words of the false prophets. Notice that He does this without taking from them their own free actions. They are doing precisely what they want. God does the same thing with the wicked nation of Assyria (Is 10:5-7) and promises to judge them and hold them accountable for their arrogance (Is 10:12). Human responsibility is never taken away even as God sovereignly decrees those same actions. The words of God to those who crucified Jesus Christ is clear (Acts 2:22-23, 1 Pet 2:8); they freely rebelled and God decreed it so.

Random Actions (v 34) – God knew what that arrow was going to do as well as the stone with which David slew Goliath. He controls the gambling casinos (Prov 16:33). It rains in Bellevue and not in Kirkland according to His decree (Amos 4:7). How often does the day of death look as though it came randomly? But God teaches us otherwise (Job 14:5, Psalm 139:16).

The Seemingly Trivial (v 38) – God decreed dogs to be somewhere doing something at a particular time. He controls the sparrows and the hairs on your head (Matt 10:29-30). He controls the sleep of animals (Is 63:14). He knows how many steps you have taken today (Job 31:4). God sees everything outside and inside (Prov 15:11). And He knows all these things having decreed them all from the beginning (Is 46:9-10).

The Gospel Before the World Began – The story of Micaiah illustrates the exhaustive sovereignty of God in His knowledge, decrees, and providence of all things. Micaiah’s story is just a part of the larger story – the story of the gospel which was written before the foundations of the world.

Before Time Began (2 Tim 1:8-10, Titus 1:1-3) – God promised eternal life through the preaching of the gospel to sinners “before times eternal”. Grace was extended to sinners before time began in the mind and purpose of God – before there ever was a sinner. This was not done because God looked down the corridors of time, saw the future, and then made choices (Rom 9:10-11). Rather, it was made according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11).

The Purpose of Predestination – God, the Creator of all things, knows all things, decreed all things, directs all things – the seemingly small, to the most significant. What is His purpose in ordering His Creation in such a way?

To Give Himself a Glorious Name (Is 63:14).

To Allow His Church to Declare That Glory (Eph 3:10).

To Declare His Power over Everything (Rom 9:17).

To Preserve a People According to His Promises to Abraham (Gen 45:7).

That We Might Sing of His Righteousness and Goodness (Ps 145:7).

Part of modern man’s problem with the doctrine of God’s exhaustive sovereignty, knowledge and providence, is that it puts all the importance on God and not us. But God did not create the heavens and the earth to declare their glory. He didn’t create us to declare our glory. He created everything and orders all things for His glory. And this means our chief reason for existence is to glorify God, enjoying His wisdom, His goodness, His grace and mercy, and doing so forever.