



Jason K. Boothe

# On the Need for Sovereign Graciousness

1 Peter 3:15–16

## On the Need for Sovereign Graciousness

The Power of Christian Gentleness

*“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience...” — 1 Peter 3:15–16*

### A Confession from the Battlefield

Throughout the 2010s, I was the theological firebrand the compromising Calvinists warned you about. Social media was coming into its own, and Facebook had become the de facto public square. In that ripe ecosystem, where every heated keystroke instantly became published opinion, I jumped headlong into the fray, determined to crush every compromising view of the Gospel. I went to war.

No Facebook wall post was safe. I dialed in my keyboard-clicking artillery straight at the idol of free will. Fire! Day after day, I posted about how corrupt and God-dishonoring that man-centered garbage really is. I paused only when necessary to explain the difference

between Armenians and Arminians. To this day, I fear some poor souls in a certain region of the Middle East never quite understood why I seemed to hate them personally.

I unleashed daily salvos of Bible verses, slick memes, airtight conclusions, and, yes, plenty of outright personal mockery. Add to that the countless, nearly endless forum replies, all part of my grand campaign to dethrone this soteriological dumpster fire from its place of honor in pop Christian culture.

Debate was the order of the day. If I could find a free-will thought leader or unwitting grandmother, I came in hot with both barrels blazing. “Operation: Own the Freewillers” was a daily, multifront war, and I relished every second of the combat.

## **Truth Without Gentleness Is Disobedience**

In the heat of all this theological battling, arguing, name-calling, and righteous indignation, truth was often couched in fiery rhetoric and dismissive mockery. But, beloved of the Lord, where was the gentleness to which we are called? Where was the respect for those who may yet be called to repentance (see 2 Timothy 2:24–25)?

Scripture does not merely command *right doctrine*; it commands a *right disposition*. The servant of the Lord “must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone,” patiently enduring evil while correcting opponents with gentleness. This is not optional seasoning. It is obedience.

To be honest, I enjoyed the fight, the controversy, the struggle against the dominant perspective I knew and know to be unbiblical. I loved the fight. But did I love my neighbor?

## **No Retreat from Sovereign Grace**

So has this preacher suffered some catastrophic theological downgrade? Am I about to unveil a freshly deconstructed, watered-down, Diet Sovereign Grace position? By no means.

I still believe with every fiber of my being that free-will soteriology is a doctrinal mutation birthed from the pit and broadcast through the loudspeakers of unsaved religion. Put simply, Arminianism is not the true Gospel. It is a false gospel that cannot lead to salvation (cf. Galatians 1:6–9). The Holy Spirit does not use lies about Christ to bring His elect to faith in Christ. That remains a hill I am fully prepared to die on.

So why not keep swinging? Why not continue bashing and thrashing the usual suspects into oblivion? Have I run out of memes? Are there no more biting sermon clips? No more wise-guy one-liners to rub into the noses of false religionists? Hardly.

## **The Missing Fruit of Sovereign Grace**

A believer in the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace, I knew the systematic theology of my position well. I could articulate the mechanics of the true Gospel adeptly. Yet what was I garnering from my relentless debating and online controversy?

Dispossessed of even a modicum of gentleness or respect, I settled for the dopamine rush and the at-a-boys from others in my camp. My work wasn't missionary or evangelical. It was purely polemical in nature, devoid of the very qualities sovereign **grace** should have made manifest in my daily walk.

For if salvation is entirely of grace, then humility must mark its recipients. As Paul asks, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Pride and harshness sit awkwardly upon those who confess monergistic mercy.

## **Preaching the Gospel Positively**

A few words for my camp. I love you, and I love the true and saving Gospel of God's sovereign grace in Christ. Certainly, it alone is the Gospel. But this does not mean we must spend our days in constant debate with false religionists.

Much to the contrary, we have the precious truth to preach positively. We have freedom to love one another lavishly. We have the mandate to bear one another's burdens (see Galatians 6:2).

Our Gospel is good news. Full stop. As we share this message with the lost world around us, religious or not, we should endeavor to declare what Christ accomplished for the sake of His elect. This is joy unspeakable, full of glory (1 Peter 1:8-9).

As for false messages masquerading as truth, watch them dissolve in the light of sovereign grace. "The mountains melt like wax before the Lord," declares the psalmist (Psalms 97:5). How much more shall the vain philosophies of false religion buckle in the presence of the truth?

## **Graciousness as the Blessed Fruit of Grace**

Sovereign grace people should be the most gracious and loving people on earth. We have been granted life in the Son, forgiveness of all sin, and Christ's imputed righteousness that clothes us completely (Romans 5:17-19).

Why then must we be so swift to devolve into vicious debate and endless strife? Snide remarks and social-media "zingers" do not cultivate humility. Scripture plainly teaches that "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20).

God, help us to love our enemies and be gracious to one another (see Matthew 5:44).

## **Bearing Burdens Instead of Winning Arguments**

Believers should seek to bear one another's burdens, tending to the household of faith even while praying for the salvation of lost family, friends, and neighbors.

The Apostle Paul modeled this heart when he wrote of his fellow Israelites: he had "great sorrow and unceasing anguish," even expressing a willingness to be accursed for their sake (Romans 9:1-3). He did not seek to "own" them intellectually. He cried out to God for their salvation, knowing that mercy belongs entirely to the Lord (Romans 9:15-16).

## **Conclusion: Sovereign Grace Must Produce Sovereign Gentleness**

The doctrine of sovereign grace is not merely a system to defend. It is a reality meant to transform. If God saved us apart from our works, apart from our wisdom, apart from our will, then the only proper posture for His people is humble gratitude expressed in Christlike gentleness. The same Lord who sovereignly grants repentance also commands that His servants reflect His character: patient, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. When we grasp that we ourselves were once blind, hostile, and spiritually dead until God made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5), our tone toward others must inevitably soften. We will still contend for truth. We will still reject false gospels. But we will do so as rescued sinners speaking to other sinners, not as conquerors boasting over enemies. In this way, our lives will display the very thing we proclaim: that salvation belongs to the Lord alone, and His sovereign grace produces not only right doctrine, but radiant gentleness.

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*At the heart of Redeemer's ministry is the steady pastoral leadership of **Jason K. Boothe**, who serves as pastor of Redeemer Church in Piketon, Ohio. Known for his warm, Gospel-centered preaching and careful exposition of Scripture, Pastor Boothe consistently points listeners to the finished work of Jesus Christ as the foundation of the Christian life. His ministry emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ, the comfort of God's promises, and the assurance believers have through faith alone. Through preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, he seeks to help ordinary people see the extraordinary grace of God at work in His Word and in their daily lives.*

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