

## The Doctrine of Surpassing Grace (SG<sub>3</sub>)

### I. Definition and Preliminary Considerations

A) Surpassing Grace (SG<sub>3</sub>) refers to the special blessings and rewards for the believer in eternity (Phase 3), which are above and beyond the universal blessings for believers.

1) universal blessings include:

- a) a resurrection body – 1Jn 3:2B “... *We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*”
- b) the total absence of pain, crying, sorrow, tears, or death – Rev 21:4 “*and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*”
- c) experiencing the presence of the Lord, face to face – Phi 1:23 “*But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better*”

B) The nomenclature is taken from Eph 2:7: “*so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*”

1) other vocabulary used to describe SG<sub>3</sub> includes:

- a) δόξα – *doxa* = glory, majesty, excellence, splendor; emphasizes the source of SG<sub>3</sub>, the Essence or glory of God, which He desires to share with us – Rom 8:17-18
- b) ἐλπίς – *elpis* = hope, expectation, or confidence; it views SG<sub>3</sub> as a future reality, which provides motivation to apply in time – Col 1:5; Eph 1:18
- c) ἐπαγγελία – *epangelia* = a promise, that which is promised; points out that the veracity of God is at stake in the matter of SG<sub>3</sub> – Heb 6:11, 17-18
- d) θησαυρός – *thēsauros* = treasure or valuables; emphasizes the true value of SG<sub>3</sub> – Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:33
- e) κληρονομία – *klēronomia* = inheritance, property received upon the bequest of another; deals with the fact that God the Father has personally determined we should have SG<sub>3</sub>, and has made us co-inheritors with Jesus Christ, the Heir of all things – Col 3:24A; Heb 1:2
- f) μισθός – *misthos* = what one is paid for work, wages that one earns; points out that Ph<sub>2</sub> works are required to obtain SG<sub>3</sub> – Mk 9:40; 1Cor 3:8
- g) μισθαποδοσία – *misthapodosia* = payment of wages; we receive a just recompense for our loyalty to God under testing – Heb 10:35, 11:26
- h) πλοῦτος – *ploutos* = riches, wealth; stresses that SG<sub>3</sub> is the true treasure, without compare in this present life – Eph 2:7
- i) the phrase “eternal life” is sometimes used as an expression for SG<sub>3</sub>, focusing on the fact that as life is made more enjoyable by possession of certain accoutrements, so those who possess SG<sub>3</sub> will enjoy heaven to a greater degree – 1Tim 6:12 cp 17-19
- j) “a better resurrection”; demonstrates that the believer with SG<sub>3</sub> will have more than just the normal/universal blessings of heaven – Heb 11:35
- k) “the kingdom of God”, in certain contexts, refers to full realization of its benefits – 2Th 1:5

- C) Every aspect of God's Plan is based on grace, as opposed to works.
- 1) Ph<sub>1</sub> – Rom 3:24 *“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”*
  - 2) Ph<sub>2</sub> – Rom 5:1-2 *“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”*
  - 3) Ph<sub>3</sub> – Eph 2:7
- D) Once one believes and accesses the grace of God, they should attempt to order their lifestyle according to the dictates of Scripture, embarking on a course of works with the aim of pleasing God. Col 1:10; 1Th 4:1
- 1) it must be observed that these Ph<sub>2</sub> works are produced from the source of faith, which is in accordance with the principle of grace – 1Th 1:2-3
  - 2) although our works are based on faith and proceed from the principle of grace, God has clearly revealed that He will reward appropriate activity, just as He will judge unrighteous activity – Mt 16:27; Jn 5:28-29
  - 3) since we walk according to the standards of grace and faith, God's works-produced reward system is still a system compatible with, and dependent upon, grace. 2Cor 5:7 *“for we walk by faith, not by sight”*; Heb 10:38

II. The Judgment Seat of Christ (βῆμα – *bēma*) is the place of administration of SG<sub>3</sub> to the Royal Family. 2Cor 5:10

- A) The basis for SG<sub>3</sub> is our accumulated Divine Good Production (DGP) in time.
- 1) DGP is defined as the activities performed by the believer based on an understanding of and faith in the Word of God; these works must be done under the Filling of the Holy Spirit – cp Rom 8:3-4
  - 2) works of any kind are not admitted in Ph<sub>1</sub> salvation – Rom 3:28 *“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”*
  - 3) works are an issue in Ph<sub>2</sub> salvation (sanctification), and the lack of acceptable works demonstrates a lack of orientation to BD – Js 2:14-20
  - 4) each increment of BD that we correctly apply accrues an increment of reward (no matter how insignificant it may seem) – Mt 10:40-42
  - 5) human good, which proceeds from fleshly activity and power, is not recognized, and will not be rewarded, by God – Jn 15:5 *“...he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*
  - 6) failure to apply BD is tantamount to a denial of the Truth, and Christ denies us reward – 2Tim 2:12-13
  - 7) if a believer accumulates some SG<sub>3</sub>, but then enters reversionism, God will still bestow any reward achieved prior to their defection – Heb 6:10
- B) Considerations of the Bema
- 1) in the Greco-Roman world, the Bema consisted of a raised platform at which an official sat to pass judgment on applicants – Jn 19:13; Ac 18:12f
  - 2) at the Rapture, the Church Universal will be assembled at a meeting of the Lord – 1Th 4:13-17
  - 3) at this time each believer will have their Ph<sub>2</sub> evaluated: all human good will be destroyed, all DGP will be rewarded – 1Cor 3:10-15; 2Cor 5:10

- 4) Christ states explicitly that He is bringing His reward with Him when He returns – Rev 22:12 cp Isa 40:10
- 5) some believers will not have any rewards, and will be ashamed at this ceremony – 1Cor 3:15 *“If any man's work will be burned up (1<sup>ST</sup> CL), he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.”*; 1Jn 2:28
- 6) due to differences in volitional response to the Word of God and differences in applications, there will be differences in rewards, resulting in class distinctions in heaven – Mk 9:35; Lk 19:12-17
- 7) there are two distinct reactions among believers when the Lord returns:
  - a) shame, humiliation, and disgrace awaits the negative believer, who did not prepare for this event – 1Jn 2:28
  - b) ecstatic happiness will be the response of those that saw and embraced the importance of DGP and SG<sub>3</sub> in time – 1Pet 4:13

### III. DGP must have the necessary components to qualify for reward:

- A) The believer must be in fellowship, with the STA isolated – Jn 15:4, 6
- B) They must assemble regularly, with the day of reward in view – Heb 10:25
- C) They must be receiving the correct teaching – 1Cor 3:10-15
  - 1) technically, this passage is to be interpreted as relating to communicators and their building/teaching of individual churches
  - 2) by application, it is applied to all believers and their approach to the CWL
  - 3) Paul, as the founder of the church in Corinth, laid a foundation that is analogous to the gospel – vs 10 cp Lk 6:48 & Mt 16:18
  - 4) he instructs all future communicators to respect his work and be very careful as to how they build upon it
  - 5) the two distinct categories of building materials refer to doctrinal teachings
    - a) gold, silver, and precious stones are categories of sound doctrine, taught by adjusted communicators, that enable believers to adjust to God and His Plan, understand the issues involved, and produce Divine Good
    - b) wood, hay, and straw refers to unsound doctrines (traditions of men, human viewpoint, or doctrines of demons), that do not advance believers, but keep them disoriented to the true issues of the CWL – Eph 4:14
  - 6) those that build with the correct materials are assured of eternal rewards, those that build with incorrect materials will suffer loss of reward
  - 7) this passage also reinforces the supreme importance of the communicator in the lives of believers – 1Th 5:12-13
  - 8) again, while this verse is, strictly speaking, interpreted as regarding pastor-teachers, each believer is responsible before the Lord for their own priesthood and the type of doctrine to which they expose themselves
- D) They must personally believe the BD – Js 1:21 *“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”*
- E) They must have the correct motivation/mental attitude orientation – Mt 6:1
- F) Receipt of SG<sub>3</sub> is based only on one's own applications – 1Cor 3:8 *“Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”*

- IV. SG<sub>3</sub> totally surpasses anything this world has to offer. 1Cor 2:9 *“but just as it is written, “things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that god has prepared for those who love him.”*
- A) Though SG<sub>3</sub> is described in humanly understandable terms (the prize; gold, silver, precious stones; riches), we must understand it is of such a nature that it cannot be truly appreciated in our frame of thinking, and that the language used is only to provide insight into its impact for eternal posterity.
- B) Peter offers a four-fold description in 1Pet 1:4 – *“an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”*
- 1) **imperishable** – not capable or liable to be reduced to a worse or lessened state, not subject to the law of entropy, not subject to the aging process
  - 2) **undefiled** – not able to be stained, polluted, or contaminated, not able to be deformed, broken, or reduced to any less-than-perfect condition
  - 3) **will not fade away** – will never lose its newness, glamour, or luster, will always provide stimulation and enjoyment
  - 4) **reserved in heaven** – attended carefully, guarded by God Himself, guaranteeing SG<sub>3</sub> is not subject to being misplaced, lost, or overlooked
- V. SG<sub>3</sub> and the Millennium
- A) Saints from the OT and Daniel’s Seventieth Week (DSW) are rewarded at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. Dan 12:13 cp Isa 40:10
- B) The twelve Apostles will rule over the twelve tribes of restored Israel. Mt 19:28
- C) Faithful members of the Royal Family will rule over the nations. Rev 2:26-27
- VI. The wreath (commonly known as the crown) represents the supreme category of SG<sub>3</sub> the Lord bestows upon believers.
- A) Paul relates it to finishing one’s course. 2Tim 4:7-8 *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*
- B) Not everyone will receive a crown; in fact, the prize can be forfeited via negative volition. 1Cor 9:24-27; Rev 3:11
- C) This “crown” (Greek στέφανος – *stephanos* , not διάδημα – *diadēma*) is called by four names:
- 1) the “crown of life”; full enjoyment of heaven is available to those who desire it – Jam 1:12; Rev 2:10
  - 2) the “crown of righteousness”; emphasizes that righteous activity is necessary to receive it, and verification of that activity – 2Tim 4:8
  - 3) the “crown of glory”; this reward, like all others, comes from the Essence of God – 1Pet 5:4
  - 4) the “crown of boasting/exultation”; sanctified proof of the believer’s accomplishments – 1Th 2:19
- D) It is also seen under the figure of “the prize” in 1Cor 9:24-27.
- 1) the background for this athletic analogy is the Isthmus games that were held in Corinth

- 2) the “race” refers to the CWL, and all believers are runners – cp Heb 12:1
- 3) the fact that many run in the race and only one wins teaches the reality that the vast majority of believers will not complete their course; only a small minority will make it successfully to the end
- 4) the race is run on a specific course, with specific rules to which the believer must adhere, if they are to win
- 5) the goal of any contest is to win, and the human viewpoint that just competing is sufficient makes a mockery of the event
- 6) this race demands a consistent exercise/training regimen that involves “self-control in all things”, and “buffeting the body”, teaching the necessity of isolating the STA and consistent application of resident BD
- 7) the believer must recognize and have legitimate fear that they can be disqualified at any time during their Ph<sub>2</sub> marathon, by:
  - a) failing to deal with the STA – Gal 6:8
  - b) not maintaining the priority of MPR – Heb 10:25
  - c) allowing non-sinful things to interfere with training – 1Cor 8:12-13
  - d) ceasing to run – Heb 10:36 *“For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”*

VII. The incredible nature of SG<sub>3</sub> is such that it will more than surpass the nature of any suffering we may face in Ph<sub>2</sub>. 2Cor 4:17 *“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison”*

- A) This is designed to motivate us in the face of testing. Js 1:2-3
- B) Suffering, when kept in perspective, has little influence in the believer’s overall continuation with God’s Will. Rom 8:18 *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

VIII. SG<sub>3</sub> is one of the primary motivators in the CWL, since it glorifies God for all eternity, as well as the obvious personal benefit it brings. 1Tim 4:10 *“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”* cp vs 7

IX. Areas in which the believer can maximize their SG<sub>3</sub> include:

- A) Enduring persecution – Mt 5:11-12
- B) Prayer – Mt 6:6
- C) Giving – Phi 4:17
- D) Hospitality – Mt 10:41
- E) Suffering for the sake of Christ – Mt 19:29; 1Pet 4:13
- F) Evangelization – 1Cor 9:16-17 cp vs 23
- G) Passing the tests associated with the physical body and its inevitable deterioration – 2Cor 4:16-17
- H) Proper function under employment – Col 3:22-24
- I) Applying BD under testing – 1Pet 1:6-7
- J) Diligence/perseverance – Heb 6:11

X. Things that negate SG<sub>3</sub> include:

- A) Wrong motives
  - 1) seeking to please men – Gal 1:10
  - 2) approbation lust – Mt 6:1-2, 5, 16
- B) Not being in fellowship – Jn 15:4
- C) Unrepentant STA activity – 1Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21
- D) Lack of diligence regarding BD – 2Jn 8
- E) Not completing one's course – Rev 2:10
- F) Altering the Word of God – Rev 22:19

XI. Concluding observations:

- A) The heroes of the faith were motivated to apply BD in their niche based on their understanding of this doctrine.
  - 1) Noah – Heb 11:7
  - 2) Abraham – Heb 11:8
  - 3) Moses – Heb 11:24-26
  - 4) anonymous, though known to God, believers – Heb 11:35
  - 5) Jesus Christ – Heb 12:2
- B) Our knowledge of the reality of SG<sub>3</sub> should motivate us to follow their example. Heb 12:1-2
  - 1) the believer should have accumulation of SG<sub>3</sub> as their priority, not focusing on the temporal blessings of life, but the eternal – Col 3:1-2; 1Pet 1:13
  - 2) recognize our time on earth is insignificant compared to the eons of eternity – 2Cor 4:16-17
- C) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the earnest, or down-payment, of our inheritance. Eph 1:14
- D) The adjusted PT desires those under his charge to fully appreciate, understand, and achieve this doctrine. Eph 1:18; 2Jn 8 *“Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”*

XII. Shame awaits those who fail to attain to full SG<sub>3</sub>. 1Jn 2:28 *“And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”*

**“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life;” Gal 6:7-8**

THE DOCTRINE OF SURPASSING GRACE  
NOVEMBER, 2002  
UPDATED MARCH, 2004