

Amazing Grace, The Doctrinal Concept

Text: Romans 4:1-5,16; 5:6-8; I Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 1:6, 7

1. WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES

Without Christ, man is totally depraved. This means we are born destitute of holiness or good principles. It is a vitiated state of the heart; wicked; corrupt of moral principles; destitute of holiness or good principles. It means that every facet of human nature has been polluted, defiled, and contaminated by sin.

This doctrine is supported by Romans 3:10, 12, 23: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Ephesians 2:1-3, 12: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Romans 10:3: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

It would be as possible for you or me to save ourselves as it would be for any of us to jump the Grand Canyon flatfooted. It would be as possible for you or me to save ourselves as it would be for a spider to build its web on the moving hands of a town clock.

2. WE DO NOT, BY NATURE, SEEK GOD

The Bible said in Ephesians 2 that before Christ comes into one's heart we have three powers working against us: 1) The world, "...ye walked according to the course of this world..." 2) The flesh, "...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind..." 3) Satan, "...the prince of the power of the air."

Romans 3:11: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Psalm 10:4: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

3. IN MERCY, GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE TO SAVE US

I John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

This is the essence of grace; God comes for us. Let's define grace. The most usual definition of grace is found in three words: God's unmerited favor. A. W. Tozer expanded on that: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving." Louis Berkhof is more to the point: grace is "the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit." Ephesians 2:8, 9 backs this truth up explicitly.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain, as expect the sinner to make any confession, or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God, unless grace shall first renew the heart."

Salvation is never shared with works. Paul expressed it like this in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

4. GRACE IS DRIVEN BY HIS LOVE

First of all, grace is the expression of the Father's love to the Son. John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 17:9: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."

Secondly, grace is the expression of God's love to the world. 1 John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." John 3:16, 17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Thirdly, grace is the expression of God's love uniquely to the believer. John 17:11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Romans 8:31-39 captures the truth of God's love by grace in inspired poetry!

5. GRACE CHANGES OUR NATURE

Jonathan Edwards said, "Grace is but Glory begun, and Glory is but Grace perfected."

Romans 7:1-6 is illustrated by the following story. A young woman fell in love and married. Soon after the honeymoon, her husband, a drill sergeant in the armed forces, became an over-bearing tyrant. Every day he made her a checklist of things to do. When he came home, it was white glove inspection. He literally went through the house examining all that pertained to his list. He was "lord of the list." At the supper hour, he discussed what was not done or how what was

done should have been done. As they went off to sleep he was still rehashing the list. When he left for the base the next morning, rather than kiss her good-bye for the day, he presented her with a new revised list. When he came home, it was white glove again. This continued day after day. The young wife became an emotional and physical wreck.

One day the sergeant dropped dead of a sudden heart attack. The young widow went to the funeral and sadly felt somewhat relieved and determined. She was determined that she was not going to be married again. Her impression of marriage was far from favorable. Her mind was made up until one day she was overwhelmed with strong feelings that turned into love for a kind man, full of compassion, mercy and patience. She was still apprehensive, because she had expected the previous marriage to be great, but instead was ghastly disappointment.

Taking the risk, she accepted this kind man's proposal. After the honeymoon, nothing changed, except for the good. This husband presented her with no list. He was a "lord of love." He kissed her good-bye for work every day. When he got home he wrapped her in his arms and told her how much he missed her. Their supper was always peaceful. And their evenings were always pleasant. And this was their existence, a very different one than she had before.

The wife became an immaculate housekeeper. One day she was cleaning in the bedroom and found behind one of the drawers an old list that her first, now deceased, husband had left her. She curiously went down the list and fell over the bed laughing. She was laughing because she was not only doing everything on the list, she was doing more than what was on the list, above and beyond what the first husband required.

We were under the law and could never satisfy the law's demands. Christ fulfilled the law for us and we became part of His glorious bride. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6). What the law could not produce, love now performs! The beauty of "Christ, our life" majors on relationship. When the relationship is present, rules become a blessing, not a burden. "For to me to live is Christ..." (Philippians 1:21).

-Pastor Pope-