

Doctrine of Grace

Is the Will Co-operative with Grace

1. The critics of Calvinism like to mischaracterize what is being said, with shallow, but very emotional illustrations that are all man-centered.
 - “I cannot believe that God will drag one person screaming and kicking into heaven, while another person who wants to be saved is barred from heaven because they are not one of the elect.”
 - “If I had five children I would not love four of them and hate the fifth one.”
 - “Why, all a person has to do is open their eyes to see the Light of the world and be saved.”
 - “All a person has to do is reach down and pick up the golden coins of grace thrown on the ground before them.”
 - “All a sinner has to do is reach out and grab the gospel lifeline that is thrown out to them.”

Salvation is all about what man can do.

2. Even a cursory reading of the Bible reveals what man cannot do, and does not do.
 - Man cannot come to Christ except the Father draws (Gk. *helkuo*, drags) him. Jesus said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:44).
 - Man cannot change his own nature. *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil”* (Jer. 13:23).
 - Man cannot be called a son of God apart from salvation. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:1-2)
 - Man cannot see the Light of the World until he is given sight. Light is not enough for blind men, and the nonbeliever is blind. *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not”* (John 1:10). *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Cor. 4:4).

- Man cannot grasp the gospel lifeline thrown out to him, for dead men in the cesspool of sin, cannot grab anything, and the nonbeliever is dead in trespasses and sin. Dead men need to be regenerated, or brought to life. Only God can give life. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”* (Eph. 2:1).
- Man cannot bend down and pick up free golden gospel coins, because the non-believer has no ability, in and of himself, to do anything in the matter of salvation, which is why he has to be born again. Dead men have no ability to crawl to Christ. Christ can go to Calvary for the sinner. The Holy Spirit can move upon those whom He will, but no spiritually dead man ever picked up something that would save him. Once a sinner is given life, then he can say,

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling’.

3. The new birth is the work of God, not man. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3:6-7).
4. Sometimes an Arminian does understand the doctrines of grace. Jacobus Arminius certainly did. He was a distinguished professor in a Reformed institution until his defection.
5. The catalyst that began to move Arminius away from Calvinism was a debate he engaged in over the doctrine of Supralapsarianism, as opposed to Infralapsarianism.
6. This controversy concerns itself with the order of the divine decrees with respect to the Fall and salvation.
7. Arminius came to the conclusion that in the Fall, the will, the emotions, and the intellect were affected.

Special Note.

According to Arminius, in the Fall, the mind of man was darkened. The heart, or affections became perverse. The will became impotent. Man was dead in sin. He was not free to do any moral good until he was first liberated from the bondage of sin.

8. Arminius believed the first step in liberating grace came in the form of what he called, Preventive Grace.
9. To prevent, in modern usage of the word, means to keep something from happening.
10. When Arminius used the word, preventing grace, the idea was that of a grace that comes before something.
11. For Arminius, preventing grace, or Preventive Grace, was the grace of God that came prior to the soul’s liberation. This comes before conversion. It must come before, if conversion is to take place.

12. A distinction can be made between the grace of God manifested in the external call to salvation, and the grace of God manifested in the internal call to salvation.
13. The external grace of God can be limited by His showing us His Word, by giving the mind the truth, and by wooing the heart to Christ. All of this grace remains outside of the soul.
14. The internal grace of God refers to what God does inside the soul of those who are to be the heirs of salvation.
15. For Arminius, the grace of God worked internally, as well as externally. Insofar as Arminius taught, that, he was consistent with the teaching of Augustine and John Calvin.
16. Then, Arminius went further to teach that “all unregenerate persons have a freedom of the will, and are capable of resisting the Holy Spirit. He can refuse grace and not open to the Person who knocks at the door of the heart.”
17. According to Arminius, the grace which converts, while it is internal, it is not irresistible.
18. The grace of God was sufficient to convert, but not efficient if man decided to reject salvation.
19. Arminius believed there was a small island in the soul of man from which man could live and make a positive, or negative, decision for Christ. God’s grace is not necessarily efficient. It does not always save.
20. Calvinism maintains that not only is the grace of God sufficient for salvation, it is efficient; it is effective in the elect, and actually converts those who are the heirs of salvation. This is God’s effectual calling.
21. Arminius taught that if man does not consent in God’s prevenient grace, the fault rests in man.
22. Historically, the whole controversy began when Pelagius became upset with the prayer of Augustine, “God, grant what Thou dost command.”
23. Pelagius believed that if grace was required for man to do his duty before God, then God would not be just for requiring man to do something he was incapable of doing.
24. Arminius disagreed with Pelagius, by saying that God does have to help the unbeliever in order for salvation to occur.
25. However, man can accept or reject God’s grace, and so man becomes the final determinative factor in his own salvation. God’s grace is not effectual unless man consents to it. Man has the ability to say, “Yes”, to God, or, “No”, to God, no matter how effectually the Spirit might try to work in the soul. The will of man can override the will of God.

26. This position is taken despite Scripture teaching that God is sovereign, and man cannot resist His decretive will.

- No man can come to Christ unless grace is granted from the Father. *John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*
- No one can be saved unless the Son wills to reveal the Father. *Matthew 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*
- Those whom the Son has revealed the Father, and are saved, have been chosen by God, *Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.*
- Those who are saved have been predestinated for salvation. *Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*
- Those who are chosen by God will be glorified. *Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
- The will of God is certain. *Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*
- God works all things according to the counsel of His own will. *Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*
- The believer exists only through Christ. *1 Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

27. The heart of man reacts strongly against the sovereignty of God, to argue that, if God is sovereign, man cannot be responsible for his sin.

28. In Romans 9, Paul addresses the issue of man's responsibility, and God's sovereignty.

- *Romans 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,*

29. In this passage Paul reveals that man's objection to the sovereignty of God is misplaced in light of His purpose, and His mercy. The purpose of God in passing over some is deliberate. His mercy, in the death of Jesus Christ, is beyond dispute. In no way is God unjust.
30. Arminius was concerned about the justice of God, as was Paul. However, Arminius came to a different conclusion than the biblical exposition given the apostle.
31. For Arminius, if God worked effectually to bring a soul to salvation, He would get the credit, but, He would also get the blame for not effectually saving all. Arminius wanted to protect God from blame.
32. Today, Arminians are still trying to protect God from being accused of being capricious, arbitrary, and blameworthy for not electing all to salvation.
33. Arminians do not need to concern themselves with the noble attempt of protecting God for He is much larger than their feeble attempts to vindicate His righteousness.
34. The problem is in the thinking of man, not the character of God. The thoughts of God are much higher, and greater than the thoughts of man.
 - *Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
35. The irony of Arminianism is that he will not give the sinner the praiseworthiness for making a wise decision concerning salvation. The Arminian will not say a person is virtuous for having believed in Christ. In fact, Arminians tend to pray like Calvinists, and sing like Calvinist. They just refuse to believe like Calvinist.
36. Question for the Arminian. "If you have two options, to accept God's grace, or, to reject God's grace, why is man at fault for rejecting salvation, but not considered virtuous for accepting salvation?"
37. The Biblical reason is that such a concession would lead to boasting, which the Scriptures exclude.
 - *Romans 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

A faith which is sovereignly given to the sinner will exclude boasting.

- *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

38. If man were able to initially do something to effect his own regeneration, then he would have the right to boast about making a vitreous decision for Christ.

39. In order to illustrate his own understanding of the poverty of the human condition, and the greatness of the role of God in the initial act of salvation, Arminius gave an illustration.

Special Note.

There was a rich man, and a beggar. The beggar was incapable of improving his financial situation. The rich man came and was willing to bestow upon the beggar sufficient resources to alleviate his dire situation. All the beggar had to do was to reach out his hand and receive the gift offered to him. The beggar has not earned the gift of grace. He is not exercising any power over the situation because he is powerless to influence the rich man. He is the recipient of grace but, the beggar will not receive it because of any virtue. The beggar must take it, or freely reject the offer of sufficient grace.

It is possible the beggar is happy in his misery. It is possible the beggar is so proud he refuses to acknowledge his need. There are many reasons why the beggar might refuse the proffered grace. He may not reach out his hand and receive the gift.

A modern day illustration of Arminian's position is that of a man on his deathbed who, in order to survive, must receive medicine. He may be so weak that someone must pour the medicine onto a spoon and hold it to his lips, but the ultimate decision to swallow, or receive the medicine is in the sick man's own will. The sick must will to live. If he refuses the medicine, he will perish. Salvation is likened to the sinner receiving, or rejecting the gospel medicine of God's grace.

A man is drowning. He is going under for the third time. He is about to perish. Unless someone throws a life preserver, and it lands near or upon the hand of the drowning man, he will perish. God will do 99% in the work of salvation, but the sinner must do his part. He must contribute his 1 % effort and believe.

40. The Biblical truth is that medicine is not offered to a dying man, nor is a lifeline thrown to a man who has drowned in the cesspool of sin. Life, resurrection life, is what is offered to the sinner. Only God can effectually and sovereignly give that. Only God can make the dead live again.

- *Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

41. In 1609 Arminius died. Some of his students presented five alternatives to the Reformation teachings of that day.

- God elects individuals on the basis of His foreknowledge. Those whom God foresees will respond to His grace are elected to salvation.
 - Christ died for all men. The intent of the atonement was to save every person without exception. However, only those who co-operate with God's grace shall be saved.
 - Man is so depraved that grace is utterly necessary.
 - Man is not so depraved he cannot willingly resist God's grace.
 - Whether or not a person who has been redeemed can lose their salvation, or persevere in the faith, is a subject for future debate.
- 42.** The Synod of Dordt (1618/1619) condemned the Remonstrance in favor of the five points of Calvinism summarized in the acrostic, TULIP.