

The Inscrutable Question: Common Grace plus Nonmeritorious Faith Directed toward Christ as the Meritorious Object plus Efficacious Grace Equals Salvation

1 Timothy 2:4 - God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

4:10 - ... we have fixed our confidence on the living God, Who is the Savior of all mankind, primarily believers.

- 10) Therefore, unlimited atonement means salvation is available to all mankind, the elect and the non-elect, the predestined and those who are under just condemnation but only believers can appropriate salvation.
- 11) Unlimited atonement makes it possible for two of the salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit to function: common and efficacious grace.
 - 1. There are two categories of volition from the spiritually brain dead: (1) The unbeliever cannot comprehend the Gospel but can make a volitional decision to listen. This is nonmeritorious and is compatible with grace. Incapable of comprehending the gospel, the Holy Spirit makes it understandable. (2) The volition of the unbeliever who responds to the gospel exhales faith in Christ. Although this faith is ineffectual since it comes from the soul of a spiritually dead person, it is made effective by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. These two functions of unbeliever volition are noted in:

Ephesians 1:13 - In whom also, when you heard [common grace] the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation [content of the message heard], in whom also, when you believed [efficacious grace], you were sealed by the Holy Spirit with reference to the promise.

- 3. Common grace is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the gospel understandable to the person who is spiritually brain dead.
- 4. Efficacious grace is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the faith of the spiritually dead person effective for eternal salvation.
- 5. Common and efficacious grace emphasize the total helplessness of the spiritually dead person. Salvation is accomplished by faith alone in Jesus Christ, the one thing that the Holy Spirit can make effective.
- 12) When the unbeliever reaches the point of God consciousness God is obligated to provide that person the opportunity to hear the Gospel.
- Titus 2:11** - The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all mankind.
- 13) At gospel hearing the Holy Spirit provides academic understanding of the Gospel. This is called common grace because it is common to all mankind when the Gospel is presented.
- 14) If the unbeliever who hears responds through faith in Christ then the Holy Spirit saves that person's soul. This is called efficacious grace because it is effectual only to those who believe.
- 14- Unlimited atonement allows every unbeliever, even though spiritually dead, the freedom to believe in Christ for salvation.

- 15- Faith is a non-meritorious system of perception, which occurs following common grace and results in efficacious grace.
- 16- Faith is the English word that translates the Greek noun **πίστις, pistis**. Faith in Christ is a transitive construction in that faith requires a direct object.
- 17- In a transitive construction, the emphasis is always on the object of one's faith not the one who has the faith.
- 18- In other words, there can be no real assurance of one's eternal future if the object of one's faith is anything other than Jesus Christ.
- 19- The same may be said for the verb form which is **πιστεύω, pisteuo**: to believe. It is a transitive verb meaning the merit is found in its object.
- 20- Thus salvation is appropriated by first of all believing and nothing else. In other words, faith alone.
- 21- Secondly, that faith must have an object that has the merit to accomplish the desired effect.
- 22- That meritorious object is Jesus and no one else is qualified to assure one's eternal salvation. In other words, Christ alone.
- 23- Salvation through faith alone in Christ alone is the message of three verses we have recently noted and are presently studying:

Galatians 2:16 - Nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by the works of the law but through faith [**πίστις, pistis**] in Jesus Christ, even we have believed [**πιστεύω, pisteuo**] in Jesus Christ in order that we might be justified by faith [**πίστις, pistis**] in Christ and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law no flesh will ever be justified.

Acts 16:31 - And they said, "(You) believe [**πιστεύω, pisteuo**] in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved ..."

John 3:16 - God demonstrated His unconditional and undiminished love to the world in the following manner: He gave His uniquely born Son for the purpose and with the result that anyone who believes ...

Here we have the present, active, participle of the verb:

πιστεύω, pisteuo - "anyone (**πᾶς, pas**) who believes"

present: Gnomic; refers to that which is an aphorism. An aphorism is a brief statement of a principle. When found in Scripture it becomes a universal point of doctrine that is always true.

active: Any member of the human race, under the principle of unlimited atonement, can believe in Jesus Christ and have eternal life.

participle: Circumstantial

- 1) God's unconditional love for the human race resulted in Him giving His Son for the purpose and with the result that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.
- 2) When you accept the gift you immediately take personal possession of it.
- 3) Again, the verb "to believe" is a transitive verb and thus its merit lies in the object, the One on whom you believe.

4) That Person to whom you direct your faith is stated next in the prepositional phrase:
εἰς, eis, plus the accusative of the pronoun:

αὐτός, autos - “in Him”

- 1) What must one do in order to be saved? Believe in Jesus Christ.
- 2) The concept of salvation is implied by the identification of Christ as being the Son of God, the uniquely born One. This indicates the absence of the sinful nature at physical birth and the impeccability of His true humanity at the cross.
- 3) Being qualified to be our Substitute, the sin problems possessed by every member of the human race were removed by our Lord’s work on the cross.
- 4) Our sins were imputed to his unique human nature and justice judged them all.
- 5) All that is required for salvation is for us to believe this. Please note that no other requirements are mentioned: no works, no penance, no vows, no sacrifices, no commitment. Just faith in Christ.
- 6) The plan that provides salvation is entirely the work of God the Father.
- 7) The sacrifice that accomplishes salvation is entirely the work of Jesus Christ.
- 8) The power that appropriates salvation is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit.
- 9) The only condition for salvation is non-meritorious faith in Jesus Christ plus absolutely nothing else!

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