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EFFICACIOUS GRACE

All is thus ascribed to the grace of God, not merely the Christian's conversion but also the whole course of his ministry. The theme of saving grace will now be developed under a number of customary theological heads or aspects, as preeminent, efficacious, irresistible, and sufficient.

Preeminent grace is grace, which comes first. It precedes all human decision and endeavor. Grace always means that it is God who takes the initiative and implies the priority of God's action on behalf of needy sinners.

That is the whole point of grace: it does not start with us, it starts with God; it is not earned or merited by us, it is freely and lovingly given to us who have no resources or deserving of our own.

"In this is love," John declares, "not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins"; consequently, "we love, because He first loved us" (I John 4:10, 19).

God, in fact, showed His prior love for us by graciously providing this redemption precisely when we had no love for Him: "God shows His love for us," says Paul, "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," so that "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:8, 10; 2 Corinthians 8:9). God took action, moreover, when we were helpless (Rom. 5:6).

Without any ability to help us or to make any contribution toward our salvation- the sinner's state is one of spiritual death, that is to say, of total inability, and his only hope is the miracle of new birth from above (John 3:3).

That is why the apostle reminds the Ephesians believers that salvation came to them when they were "dead" in sins, from which there follows only one conclusion, namely, that it is by grace that they were saved.

Both now and for all eternity the Christian will be indebted to "the immeasurable riches" of God's grace displayed in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus; for, Paul insists, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:5-9). But for the preeminence or priority, of divine grace, all would be lost.

Efficacious grace is grace, which affects the purpose for which it is given. It is efficacious simply because it is God's grace. What is involved here is the doctrine of God: what God purposes and performs cannot fail or come to nothing; otherwise He is not God.

The indefectibility of redeeming grace is seen not only in the turning of sinners from darkness to light but also in the bringing of them to the consummation of eternal glory. "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me," Jesus declared; "and him who comes to Me I will not cast out; and this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up at the last day" (John 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 9, 12, 24).

There is no power in the entire universe that can undo or frustrate the work of God's special grace: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," says the Good Shepherd. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28).

All, as we have seen, from beginning to end, is owed to the grace of Almighty God (2 Corinthians 5:18, 21).