

God’s Amazing Grace – Part 3

God’s Comprehensive and Righteous Sovereignty Man’s Complete and Responsible Sinfulness

*“I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself,
that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.*

Jeremiah 10:23

How about some Wisdom?

Proverbs 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

Proverbs 16:4 ⁴ The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Proverbs 16:9 ⁹ The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Proverbs 16:33 ³³ The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Proverbs 19:21 ²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Proverbs 20:24 ²⁴ A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

The Myth of Free Will (part 1)

Indeed, God alone is FREE to do all that he wills, but his “will” is not free. The will of God flows directly from his nature and character. This even God’s “will” is not free for he cannot do wickedly, cannot pervert justice, cannot lie, cannot change his mind, cannot deny himself, cannot be unfaithful. God cannot break his promises or violate his word. He has bound himself (in a sense), though since his promises and word also flow from his will that flows from his nature and character he is never keeping a promise against his will. Rather than these “constraints” or “limitations” of the will somehow minimizing God’s glory – they truly exalt him as all the more glorious as his holiness and perfections guide his will in all things.

Job 34:12 ¹² Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.

Numbers 23:19 ¹⁹ God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

2 Timothy 2:13 ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself.

James 1:17 ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.¹

Charles H. Spurgeon "I will go as far as Martin Luther, where he says, **'If any man ascribes anything of salvation, even the very least thing, to the free will of man, he knows nothing of grace, and he has not learned Jesus Christ rightly.'**"--C. H. Spurgeon, Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 395

Jeremiah 13:23 *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. [sinners cannot truly change]*

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick [incurable, woeful, desperately wicked]; who can understand it?[only God does]*

Every day at a zoo you could enter the lions cage/zone and put a pile of salad and a pile of meat side by side. Every day and every time the Lion will eat only the meat. One might say “He’s free to eat either”. Yet, a lion is by nature not a vegetarian but a carnivore and as such he is bound by his nature. Man, by nature after the fall of Adam, is a sinner by nature. As such he sins. A lion does not become a carnivore but is one by nature – such that you won’t find ANY vegetarian lions. A man is does not become a sinner but is one by nature – such that you won’t find ANY righteous men.

Psalm 130:3 ³ *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*

Psalm 143:2 *Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.*

Job 9:2 *"Truly I know that it is so: But how can a man be in the right before God?"* ³ *If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.*

Job 15:14 *What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? (This was said by Eliphaz the Temanite. Job 42:7 indicates the he did not speak right concerning God, but points out no fault when speaking about man!)*

Each and every human is sinful inward and sins outward. God is just to leave us in our sin and eternal condemnation under His wrath. There is nothing man can do (because he cannot and will not act against his nature), it is absolutely impossible for a man to save himself or do anything to be saved. We will never understand and believe the gospel. We will never seek God and turn from our sin, because dead men don't do anything. Unless we are brought from death to life by the power of God we will not and cannot respond to the gospel with faith and repentance!

Ephesians 2:1-5 And you were **dead in the trespasses and sins** ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were **dead in our trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved-

^{ESV} **Rom 3:9-12** ⁹ What then? Are we Jews¹ any better off?² No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both ^aJews and ^bGreeks, are ^cunder sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: ^a"None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Q. What is the natural condition of all mankind?

A. Everyone is by nature DEAD in trespasses and sins and a child of wrath.

Q. Because of this condition what do people do?

A. Live sinfully. Because we are born condemned and by nature children of wrath by nature we sin because we are sinners and because sin is our master (Romans 6, Eph. 2).

Let us consider the breadth of this spiritual death.

1. It does not mean that all men act equally sinful or sin to the extreme, but all sin.
2. It does not mean that no one does anything that does not appear good to other men, just not to God.
3. It does not mean that man does not have a will or make choices, but he has a sin enslaved will producing wrong and limited choices.

When we are born we are:

- **Sinners** (Gen. 8:21, Psa.51:5; 58:3)

*Genesis 8:21 ...the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, **for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth**. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.*

*Psalms 51:5 ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth **in iniquity**, and **in sin** did my mother conceive me.*

- **Spiritually Dead** (dead in sin, dead to righteousness) (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13)

*Colossians 2:13 ¹³ And you, who were **dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh**,*

- **Spiritually Blind** (2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 John 2:11; 2 Cor. 3:14; John 12:40;)

*2 Corinthians 4:4 ⁴ In their case the god of this world has **blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

*John 12:39-40 ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰ "**He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.**"*

- **By nature objects of wrath.** (Gen. 8:21; Psa. 51:5; Mat. 7:21; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 9:22)

*Ephesians 2:3 ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.*

- **Spiritually Deaf** (Mark 8:18; John 10:27)

*John 10:26-27 ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep **hear my voice***

- **Unable to Understand & Believe** (Eph. 4:18; 1 Cor. 2:14; John 8:43-45; John 5:44; 10:26; Rom 3:10-11)

*1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and **he is not able to understand** them because they are spiritually discerned.*

*Romans 3:10-11 ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ **no one understands**; no one seeks for God.*

John 8:43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire... ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

*John 8:43-45 ⁴³ **Why do you not understand what I say?** It is because **you cannot bear to hear my word.** ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But **because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.***

*Ephesians 4:17-18 ¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the **futility of their minds.** ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding,*

- **Incapable of Change** (Isa.44:20; Jer. 13:23; 17:9; John 3:6)

*Isaiah 44:20 ²⁰ He feeds on ashes; **a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"** [of idol worshipers]*

Jeremiah 13:23 ²³ *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.*

John 3:6 ⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

- **Unwilling and Unable to Come & Believe** (John 6:37, 44-45; 65; John 10:26-27; John 12:37-41; Rom. 2:10-12)

John 6:37 ³⁷ *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out...⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day...⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe...⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

John 12:37-39 ³⁷ *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"³⁹ Therefore they could not believe.*

- **Unworthy of Anything** (no rights at all) (Job 40:4; Gen. 18:27; Isa. 64:6; Luke 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 11:35-36; Job. 35:7-8;

Isaiah 64:6 ⁶ *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

Romans 3:11-12 ¹¹ *no one understands; no one seeks for God.* ¹² *All have turned aside; together they have become **worthless**; no one does good, not even one."*

- **Hard hearted** (stone hearts) (Rom. 2:5; Ezek. 36:26)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the **heart of stone** from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

Ephesians 4:17-18 ¹⁷ *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* ¹⁸ ***They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.***

- **Hostile enemies toward God** (Rom. 8:7-8; Col. 1:21)

Romans 8:7-8 ⁷ *For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it **does not** submit to God's law; indeed, **it cannot.*** ⁸ ***Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

Colossians 1:21 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,*

- **Slave to Sin** (not free-will, but enslaved will John 8:34; Rom. 6; Rom. 7:14; 8:7-8; Gal. 4:24-25)

John 8:34 *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits **sin is a slave to sin***

Romans 6:20 *When you were **slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

(Note: please take the time to look up these verses and see what the Bible teaches, read it in context!)

The Myth of Free Will (part 2)

Charles H. Spurgeon said: "It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free will is nonsense. Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in, but free will is simply ridiculous." (Free-will - A Slave, Dec.6, 1855)

God has given mankind the some degree of **freedom and ability to make choices** **but this is not free-will**. Mankind is limited in the kinds of choices we can make. For example, we cannot decide to stretch out our arms and fly like a bird or to live at the bottom of the ocean for the rest of our lives like a sea creature (unaided by devices, of course). Our freedom and ability to make **choices are limited by our "nature"**. We can only make choices within the ability and nature of mankind (we cannot by choice make it rain, make stars fall from the sky, or put an end to the law of gravity). But we can make ordinary choices like what to wear, whether to drive our car or take the bus, what we will eat for breakfast etc. Even these choices are not completely free, in that, I cannot choose to drive my car if I don't have a car, or wear clothes I saw in an advertisement, but are not in my possession or eat for breakfast a food for which the ingredients are not available in my house or even country (as the case may be).

So, even though we have the freedom and ability to make choices, they are choices between **limited options**. They are **limited by our nature and by our circumstances**. Further, my will, is not neutral (free). It is controlled by desires, preferences and affections. I do not like "liver". I did not choose to dislike it, but upon tasting it discovered that I just don't like the flavor at all. Think of some type of food that you genuinely find disgusting and despise. Now, can you decide that from this moment onwards that will now be your favorite food? Can you decide, with your free-will that the flavor (that disgusts you) is now delicious and you want it for every meal and snack. Likewise, by your supposed free-will can you determine what you like or do you discover what you like? Can you decide that the taste and aroma of your favorite dish will now make you nauseous (feel sick)? Or rather, even if you pretend, when the scent of that delightful dish is in the area and your mouth begins salivating will you really be able to fool yourself into thinking, what a terrible stench?

Isn't it utterly nonsensical? We discover our preferences, affections and desires (of course to a degree we can foster and encourage some interests) They come from within us and are not based on our decisions or environment. How often in one family a mother struggles to keep up with the variety of likes and dislikes. What one child likes another hates and so on. Yes, there are a few areas of agreement, and cultural concerns, but they are not the result of decision or the will but merely influences, because **the will makes no independent or unbiased decisions, many factors play a decisive role in influencing decisions and when it comes to a decision about God we are not neutral, but under the controlling influence of our sinful nature (slaves to sin Rom. 6:20)**

- Further, if a man is born color-blind, what do you think his favorite color is? He has none.
- If a woman was born without a sense of smell, what aroma will tempt her? None can.
- If a boy is born without taste buds, what food will he savor? None.
- If a girl is born without hearing, what will her preferred style of music be? She won't (can't) have one.
- Sadly, these things are impossible for these people, and mankind's will with regard to God, righteousness and truth is in the same condition.

If a person is born spiritually dead in sin, blind, deaf and without understanding, what will their response to God be? Nothing or rejection! If his or her heart is hostile toward God will they willingly love and serve Him? They will not, they cannot because they do not truly desire to do so. (Rom.8:7,8)

Some will respond saying "It's not fair!". There are some in this world born physically blind, did they choose this? Others are born deaf, or dumb or retarded or deformed, did they choose this? Why don't you cry out with those who openly defy God "not fair?" Did you choose your mother and father? Did you choose the country, city or hospital where you would be born? Did you choose the natural color of your skin, hair or eyes? Did you choose how tall or short you would be? Did you choose your level of intelligence, talents, skills or aptitudes? If you did not choose these things, and God has every right to make you how and where He pleases, then does he not also have every right over our souls as well? Oh, I trust the "idol" or free-will is falling! I remember when I relinquished my pseudo-intellectual

humanistic perspective of free-will and took the Bible at its word, a greater gratitude in my heart for the grace that I had freely received filled my soul.

If what the Bible teaches is true, free will is a falsehood and a fictitious fallacy, because our will is not free, but enslaved to sin, it is darkened in its understanding, it will never turn to God indeed it cannot. Turning to God is against its preference, desires and affections. Any turn toward God that does not also involve our preference, desires and affections is not a true turn and will amount to nothing.

The Bible teaches that every part) of the sinner (intellect [understanding], emotions, will, conscience, preference, affections, desires etc.—i.e. total depravity) has been affected and is controlled by sin. We are not saying that every man is as bad as he can be, but that every man's total being is affected by sin. Thank God, for his restraining hand even in the lives of unbelievers.

1. The sinner's intellect is controlled by his sinful nature (Rom 3:11; Eph 4:17-18;)
2. The sinner's emotions are controlled by his sinful nature (Rom 1:30; 3:18; Eph 4:19).
3. The sinner's will is controlled by his sinful nature (John 5:40).
4. The sinner's conscience is defiled by sin (Titus 1:15).

Until and unless God takes out our heart of stone and puts in its place a heart of flesh (Eze 11:19); changes our preferences, desires and affections (Eze 36:26-27); makes us alive (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13); opens our blind eyes (2 Cor. 4:6); opens our deaf ears (Isa. 50:5); transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13) we will not (indeed cannot) respond to the gospel. Rather it is veiled to us.

We are not saying that man is a robot or puppet (we are not), but that every man has freedom of choice and his ability to make choices is limited by his understanding, affections, will etc. thus until God brings about a "new creation" one cannot see, understand and truly desire God. But, once enable or regenerated they will now see, understand and truly desire that which is the most pure, perfect and desirable thing in the universe, God.

The Myth of free-will is perpetuated by the **philosophical deception** rooted in man’s wisdom/foolishness that says “God can’t hold us responsible unless we are able...responsibility implies ability.” They will even say that God is unfair if he requires of us what we cannot do. But Consider - there are passages commanding people to seek the Lord (2 Chron. 15:2; Isa. 55:6 etc.) but just like the command for us to "be holy as I am holy"(Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1;15) and to "be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect" (Mat. 5:48) we are **unable** to obey the commands even though we ought to and are responsible for not!. Even the command to believe is something we’ve seen that natural man must, but cannot do!

What about "seekers"? - *Romans 3:11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.*

No such thing. What might appear to us to be a seeker, may be those the father is drawing. But we have to re-think our theology and approach to ministry, witness and evangelism to conform with scripture.

Today we often here about being "seeker-sensitive" and I whole heartedly agree! In all things let us please the only true "seeker" Jesus Christ who came to "*seek and save the lost*" (Luke 19:10)

Possibly this will help you to understand why so few truly believe. It is not because the Devil is winning or Christ is not powerful enough, but simply following his plan.

Matthew 7:14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

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