

God Loves us because He Chooses to

Why did Christ undertake the difficult, painful work of our redemption? He did not redeem us because He needed us or was forced to do it. As God He needed nothing and no one. As God He cannot be compelled by anyone or anything outside of Himself to do anything. It is likewise clear that Christ did not carry out the work of redemption because He owed us that work. He owed us nothing, except wrath and punishment on account of our sinfulness.

Why then did He undertake this most costly work, the work of redemption? There is but one prompting cause, one reason why. It is grace. God is in His very nature, in His essence, gracious. The words grace and gracious denote a special kind of love, a love that is ultimately unique, found purely in God alone. Grace is that love which is caused by the one who loves, not by the person or thing loved. Human love is usually caused by its object. We like a certain kind of food because it tastes good. The taste is the cause of our liking it. We love certain people because they love us, are good to us, or have certain traits that make them loveable to us. The cause of the love is in the ones we love; that is, it is caused by the object of our love. However, God's love is gracious; that is, God loves not because we, the object, are loveable but because He is loving. When the Scriptures speak of grace in the matter of our redemption, the word is most simply defined as "the undeserved love of God." He loves us, not because we deserve it; He loves us freely because He chooses to.

St. Paul gives us this definition of grace in Romans where he speaks of it so often as a cause of salvation in contrast to works, that is, in contrast to anything in us or anything that we do, could do, or even might do in the future. Paul says, for example, in Romans 5:8 that God showed us His love (this unique love which we call grace) by dying for us while we were still sinners. Thus, the cause of His love is and must be outside of us and in Him alone.

Paul puts God's grace in the sharpest contrast with our works in the matter of redemption when he says in Romans 3:22-24: "*For there is no difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" That all have sinned is the constant in our condition; there is never a time this side of eternity when that is not the case. The cause, therefore, of God's love for us and our redemption must be in God, since on account of our sinful nature and condition the cause of our redemption can never be in us. It is alone in the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Some have foolishly said, "Well then, sin causes Him to love us; therefore, let us sin all the more that He may love us all the more." Paul says that those who reason this way truly deserve God's wrath and judgment (Romans 3:5-8) and can count on receiving it because of their blasphemy, a blasphemy which is itself a rejection of the redeeming work of Christ for them! Sin and sinfulness could never cause the sinless and holy God to love us, any more than sickness is the cause of a cure. Sickness shows the need for a cure; it doesn't cause the cure. Just so, our sin shows how desperately we need the grace of God and the redeeming work of Christ.