***The Efficacious Grace of God - Jude 1

JD04-01***

We are returning to our study of the book of Jude. Just to remind you, we have come to the end of the first verse, and we have stopped on the word "called." So we have been looking at the doctrine of election. We looked last time, along with that, at the doctrine of common grace. The question that is often asked is, "Why are many non-Christians good people?" The reason for this is the common grace of God which extends to every human being. This common grace, this common blessing of God, comes through the light of creation; it comes through conscience; it comes through government; it comes through various instruments that form public opinion; and, it comes through a sense that is in man of divine punishment and of divine reward.

These channels of what we call "common grace" provide restraint on sin so that the result is that good men develop who nevertheless are not Christians. Common grace will not make you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The concepts of the Word permeate our society to a certain extent. So they influence the non-Christian for good, but not for salvation. These are good men, of course, by human standards, but by God's divine standards, these good men who have responded to the restraining influence of God's common grace are not considered good men. They are considered men whose old sin natures are functioning and operating, and the good that comes out of them is simply human good.

Beyond the external influence of common grace (and this from outside sources that we're talking about) is an internal calling that we want to look at now, and that is the "efficacious grace of God." This is the grace of God that accomplishes certain specific goals every time. The work of the Holy Spirit is within an unbeliever in such a way that it leads him to salvation. This is efficacious grace, and it's irresistible when God sets it in motion within a person. It's the work of the Holy Spirit in an unbeliever not to overrule his will, but to win his will and to cause it to spontaneously respond to the will of God. So when a person acts in salvation, as far as he is aware, he has made the move of his own volition. However, from the Word of God, we know that something took place within him by the moving of God the Holy Spirit in the form of efficacious grace that caused his will to phase into God's will.

So the question is how and why does an unbeliever come to Christ for salvation? Now if you are going to be a true ambassador of Jesus Christ, there are times when you are going to do the work of an evangelist. You are going to be the Lord's witness. Therefore, it is necessary for you to know something about the answer to this question. How and why does a person come to salvation? From the human side, we say that a person comes how? By faith. And why? Because he wants to be saved. He doesn't want to spend eternity in hell. From the divine side, the answer is summed up in the doctrine we're going to look at now--the doctrine of efficacious grace. Efficacious grace is how and why a person comes to salvation.

**Pelagius**

So how does an unbeliever come to Christ? There are several answers historically. There is the answer of this man that we already referred to--Pelagius, the British Monk. Pelagianism is the point of view taught by Pelagius which declared that he did not believe in the total depravity of man. He did not believe that man was without any ability to move toward God. He believed that man could come to God simply on the basis of a decision of his will alone. So this suggests that a man can gain access to God on the basis of what he does--his works. Pelagianism in our day is anything that adds to the pure grace of God as a source of salvation.

Actually the first Pelagian was probably Adam himself because this is exactly what Adam decided. After he had sinned, he looked at his situation. He was aware of the consequences of sin as evidenced by the awareness of his nakedness, probably with the loss of his light covering. So he tried to make his own solution. Adam decided, "I can fix my relationship to God, and I can adjust myself to living in this society now where I am a sinner." So he made his fig leaf aprons, and he sought to make himself acceptable in his society and before God.

Now this is Satan's way of countering the pure grace of God. Anytime you might be tempted (and sometimes I'm sure we are guilty of this), of saying to people and explaining to them the gospel, we'll say something like this: "God has done everything necessary for you to be saved. Now it's up to you." When you stop and think of what you have said, to suggest that now God has done everything necessary, and now it's your responsibility from here on, what you are really saying is, "God has done everything to provide you with salvation up to this point. After that, He can't do anything. Now you with your world must come in and take over."

Here is where you have to get sound doctrine. Your will does take action from the point of what God has provided, which is complete. But that will will not move until God has moved it, through the Spirit of God, through efficacious grace, to move in the direction of salvation. So God is not coming up to this point and quitting. God is also taking you across the line. So it is wrong to say to people, "God has done everything necessary for your salvation. Now it's up to you." It is not up to you. It is you being moved by God. The person that is moved by God will find a desire in his heart ready to move out and to reach out and take the salvation that God has provided. You need not hesitate to tell people that the reason they will be saved is because they are responding to a movement of God upon their heart. If that movement is not there, they will not respond.

People do not fail to receive Jesus Christ just because of something they decide. It's because they start with different kinds of wills to begin with. The wills of some are motivated to accept. The wills of others are not. So what is the answer of Pelagius when you ask him how and why does a person come to Christ? He would say I came by myself. Yet Scripture shows us that that is not true. Romans 3:11 says that, "There is none that seeks after God."

**Semi-Pelagianism**

There is another position that stemmed from Pelagius's teaching, and that was called the semi-Pelagian position, and this was stated in the words, "I wanted to come to Christ, and God helped me." This denies the exercise of the grace of God to a believer before salvation--before he comes to Christ. It still takes Pelagius's position that my world can move to God. All I have to decide is, "I want to go to God. I want to be saved, and I'm on my way. Then God will come in and carry me through. This is what the semi-Pelagian says. But this again dilutes the pure grace of God.

**Arminianism**

There is another answer, and that was by a man named Jacob Arminius, a Dutch theologian. He was once a Calvinist, but he deviated to a position which has now been named after him. Arminianism has influenced a large segment of professing Christianity. For example, the great areas of the Methodist Church are Arminian. Pentecostalism is Armenian. All of these groups that believe that a person can cause himself to be lost again are in the Arminian camp. A person can be saved, however, and be an Arminian. It's just that he's got some false doctrine.

Arminius believed that men were depraved, but that Jesus Christ died for them, and He promoted a sufficient grace for everybody. He thought that if men would cooperate with the sufficient grace provided through the death of Christ, unbelievers will come to salvation in Christ. This sufficient grace has been provided through the death of Christ, but it only becomes sufficient when an unbeliever decides to cooperate with it. The sufficient grace was there, Arminius said, and when your will decides to move out, then it becomes operational for you. The will of the unbeliever, again, here makes the decision to move.

In the answer to the question how and why does a person come to Christ, Arminius said, "God gave me sufficient grace to come, and I cooperated." That's the key. "I cooperated." And yet we know that we do not cooperate. "There is none that seeks after God--no, not one." If there is one thing the unbeliever does not do, it is cooperate with God. His will is resistant to God until, again, the Spirit of God comes in and through efficacious grace causes him to reach out and accept what God has provided.

**Lutheranism**

There's another answer, and that's the answer of the Lutherans. The Lutherans refuse to admit that the reason an unbeliever is not saved is because of a sovereign withholding of efficacious grace. The Lutheran position, instead, believes, as does the Calvinist, that man is totally depraved. They hold that if God does not bring Jesus Christ that he will not come. They hold that if the unbeliever does not come, however, it is because he resists the grace of God. So the Lutherans say, "God has to reach out. God has to bring. God has to provide. However, if a person does not come to Christ, it's because he's resisting this call of God." This again counters Scripture as we shall see. The Word of God says that when efficacious grace hits you, I don't care who you are; what you have done; or, how lowly a sinner you may be, when efficacious grace hits you, you will not be able to say anything but, "Yes."

Common grace will not bring you to that. Common grace will alert you to God, to what's out there, and to what's functioning. However, it takes efficacious grace to cause you to cross the line into eternal life. You will never do that in your own will because the will is depraved. So the Lutheran says it this way: "God brought me, and I did not resist, and that's why I'm saved."

**Calvinism**

The answer of John Calvin was that men are totally depraved. So they will not be saved if God does not exercise grace. He believed that God exercises grace in the hearts of the elect only, and these inevitably come. That is, that He exercises efficacious grace in the hearts of the elect only, and they will come. God sovereignly chooses, thus, those whom we will bring to salvation. The Calvinist simply says, "How does a person come to Christ? God brought me. Period." That is the true biblical position. How does a person come to Christ? God brought me.

So here's how it goes: Pelagianism says we come to Christ by ourselves. Semi-Pelagianism says we want to come, so God helps us to do so. Arminianism says God gives us sufficient grace to come through the death of Christ, and we cooperate. Lutheranism says God drew us, and we don't resist. Calvinism says God brought me. The biblical doctrine of salvation, therefore, is that God has provided all that is necessary for our salvation, and this provision includes the necessary moving of our depraved wills to decide to believe. God does this through the provision of efficacious grace which brings us to faith in Jesus Christ.

**Efficacious Grace vs. Common Grace**

I want you to think about some distinctions to compare this common grace and efficacious grace. Common grace is a restraint which is upon all men. Everybody in the world, the most benighted heathen in the most darkened place on the face of this earth, is a recipient of common grace. This is through reason. This is through conscience. This is through creation, through government, and to the extent that he is in contact with the Word of God, even through that. God gives in our society, as you know, a respect for the Bible. That's because of common grace. However, common grace can never lead a person to salvation. It can only alert him to his need. It can alert him to the fact that there's a God out there, but it can never lead him to salvation. Man sees nature and concludes there's a God. That's common grace, but he's not a Christian.

The difference lies in several directions between this common grace and efficacious grace which does move a person to salvation. There's a difference in their subject, as we've indicated. All of mankind are the subjects of common grace. Only the elect are the subjects of efficacious grace. There's a difference in their nature. Common grace is a grace which is mediated through some means, such as the Word, creation, and so on. It's secondhand information. Efficacious grace is a work of God that immediately takes place upon the mentality (the heart) of the individual directly from within him to influence him in his salvation.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you." There is the word for the doctrine of election, the word that we are looking at in the book of Jude. "Chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." I want you to notice the word "sanctification." The word "sanctification" in the Greek language means "to set apart." What this verse is saying is that the Holy Spirit here is setting apart an unbeliever to faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice when this is done relative to salvation. "He has from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through*  sanctification. That means it preceded. Before you were ever saved, God the Holy Spirit moved in and took action upon you and set you aside to salvation and to the belief of the truth. Before you ever believed the Word of the gospel, and before you ever heard the Word of the gospel, the Spirit of God set you aside and brought you the Word of the gospel, and then came salvation.

The question is sometimes raised, "Can a person be saved without hearing the gospel?" Alright, there's your verse. The answer is, "No." You cannot be saved without hearing the gospel because the Holy Spirit sets you aside to sanctification and to the belief of the truth, and then comes salvation. You have to have the truth before you can believe it. So this constitutes the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing a sinner for salvation. Sanctification is the grace of the Holy Spirit which He exercises directly upon our hearts preparing us to receive the Savior.

1 Peter 1:1-2 says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The elect were saved through what? The means comes first here--through sanctification of the spirit. Why are you elect? Because God the Holy Spirit set you aside, and that's why you became obedient to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; that is, the message of the gospel. This was after you received it, because you were already set aside. So you cannot come to salvation until you have been set aside by the Holy Spirit, and until you have received the Word of the gospel. The setting aside is the preparation for the work of efficacious grace that brings you to the point where you say, "Yes" to the truth. It's setting the sinner apart for salvation.

Notice that both 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 1 Peter 1:1-2 link the sanctification of the Holy Spirit with the elect. Sanctification determines who is elect. Why are you saved? Because God set you apart to it. Sanctification and election to salvation are tied together. It extends, of course, only to the elect.

There's another difference, and that's in their effects. The effect of common grace is to give us a superficial knowledge of God. All we know from common grace is that He's out there someplace. But this knowledge is merely religious in nature, and it will not bring you to salvation. It creates a superficial restraint of sin, but it does not remove the guilt. That's the difference that you have to recognize. Knowing that God is out there will create a certain restraint on sin in a primitive society, but it will not remove the guilt of sin until efficacious grace has come in with the Holy Spirit setting this person aside, giving him the gospel information, and moving him across the line into salvation. The whole effect of common grace is superficial, and it's transient. The effects of efficacious grace, which the Holy Spirit works in the heart of the elect, is deep. It's permanent. It brings a sinner permanently into a position of the possession of eternal life.

**The External and the Internal Calling**

There is a distinction between the external calling and the internal calling. The external calling we may call common grace, as we have been. God has an external calling. That's common grace. But he has an internal calling, which is efficacious grace. One is the cause of the other. The external calling is what comes through the sinner when he hears the gospel. Common grace is what instigates and produces the general calling. So God extends a general calling. This is why the heathen looks at creation, and he's receiving God's general calling. God holds him responsible for how he responds to that general calling. That response to common grace determines what God is obliged to do beyond that point.

God has already obligated Himself by His election of those who will respond. The person who gets that common grace out there in the jungle responds in such a way that God then brings him efficacious grace and the information of the gospel, and he believes. So in the case of this internal calling to faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, this is the result of this efficacious grace. You could call the external and internal calling "general" and "special" calling. General is the preaching of the gospel to all men. It's the testimony of God in nature. However, special calling is the work of the Holy Spirit that leads to efficacious grace and to salvation.

**Calling**

Now there are some words in the New Testament that are important. One word is this word for "calling" that we've been talking about. In the Greek, this is the word "kaleo." "Kaleo" is used in two ways in the New Testament. One is in the sense of this general call that we have been referring to. This is the call that goes to all men. You have it, for example, in Matthew 20:16: "For many are called but few are chosen." What does that mean? "Many are called but few are chosen." It's using this general call. It's a general invitation. It goes out universally to everybody through the various channels that we've already indicated. However, few respond. In the epistles of Paul, there is another way that this word is used. Anytime Paul uses the word "call," it is always used in the sense of effectual call. One is common grace, and one is effectual grace. There are two ways that the word "call" is used. In Paul's writing, it's always a call that results in a person becoming a believer. It is thus only extended to those who are elect.

Let's talk about the nature of the external call. It includes the declaration of the plan of God. Here is a group of people. How does the external call come to them? Well, somebody stands up and he preaches to them the gospel. He includes the command that they should change their mind and that they should believe this. He gives them various motivations--some good, some maybe not good. He gives them fear, hope, or gratitude, but they're also promised that if they would accept this, they would enter a relationship with God where He would accept them. That's the message of salvation. That's the nature of the external call.

The nature of the internal call, however, is that this is a call from God the Holy Spirit, and it is a call that is different from what you hear in just the Word of God. Some people say, "Well if I preach the Word of God to people, they have received God's efficacious call. If they hear the word, they can believe it. All we do is just preach the word." Notice in John 6:44 that that's not exactly true. In John 6:44, the Lord Jesus says, "No man can come to me except the Father who sent him draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day." When a man is saved, there is something more that has moved him than just hearing the word. Unless the Father draws him through the work of the Holy Spirit, he will not come. I don't care how much he has heard the gospel. This explains why some people have heard the gospel many times.

Sometimes people come to me and say, "I just can't understand this person. He's heard the gospel scores of times and he just says, 'No.' How can you say that? How can this person hear the gospel so often and know it so well, and yet resist it?" Well here's the answer. Just hearing the gospel is not enough. God the Holy Spirit has to come in with something else, and that is to draw the sinner. If men could come just because you explained the gospel to them, there wouldn't be any problem. Far more of them probably would respond if it was just up to them, if they could. However, there is something more than just their decision.

John 6:45 says. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'" Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father comes unto me." They do have to have the Word; they do have to hear; and they do have to learn, but it is God who must draw. The work of the Holy Spirit and hearing the gospel are two different things. Just because you hear the gospel doesn't mean you will believe. You hear the gospel, and you will believe if you have an effectual call.

So we have a general and we have a specific call. We have Romans 8:30 as another example here: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom he called, them He also justified." Many are called, but few are chosen. That's the general call. When it comes to the specific call, it's those whom He has called, those are the ones He has justified. Notice that you can equate the phrases, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called," and "Whom He called, them He also justified." Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to like to read this in class, and he would say, "100% of those whom He did predestined, He called. 100% of those whom He called, He justified. And 100% of those whom He justified, He glorified." That was his way of getting across that effectual grace always works. You cannot say, "No" to it. And without it, you cannot say, "Yes."

**The Description of Effectual Grace**

1. So let's briefly look at some descriptions of effectual grace. First, we've seen that it is a divine influence (1 Peter 1:2). It's the sanctification of the Spirit setting us aside unto faith.
2. Secondly, it's immediate. It takes place in our hearts. It's an operation of the Holy Spirit. It's not something that just comes through the Word. It's the Spirit's influence, but it's distinguished from the Word of God. You can see that more extensively in 1 Corinthians 2:12-15. 1 Corinthians 2:14 distinguishes between some men to whom the Bible is foolishness, and others who can understand it. If it were not for God the Holy Spirit, there is none of us who would understand it. That's the point of the verse. If it were not for God the Holy Spirit, there is not one of us that would understand the Word sufficient to get over the idea that we think it's stupid, and to believe it.
3. Thirdly, this is supernatural. A man outside of Jesus Christ in his natural state is spiritually dead. He has to be born spiritually. We're told in the Word of God that the natural man is spiritually blind. He can't see it (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). 2 Corinthians 2:14 says that we're also deaf. Here's the condition of the person outside of Christ. He's deaf; he's blind; and, he's dead. There is no use adding "dumb" because that pretty well covers it. He's deaf; he's blind; and, he's dead. If anything spiritually is going to happen to a person in that condition, it obviously takes a supernatural act of God to produce something.

If you've ever engaged in witnessing, this is one of the primary things that you will notice about people, that they are deaf to the gospel. They're blind to their need of the gospel. They're dead. There's no point of communication. There's no point of contact. This is why all you can do as a witness is give the information, and then back off and let God the Holy Spirit do His work. Who do you think you are?

Who does the professional preacher think he is when he thinks this over he says, "I must get these people saved." So he says, "I know what I'll do. Our trouble is we don't give the right kind of invitation. We will ask people to make a public move. If people can stand up, they'll crystallize their faith. If they can walk down the aisle, it'll make it so real to them that they'll never forget it." Sometimes they walk the aisle, and they never forget it, and they regret it for the rest of their lives.

Then the preacher says, "I know my trouble. I've only sung three verses of the invitation hymn. If we have 17 verses, a person will be able to come. From now on, it's 17 verses of the invitation hymn. What we need is to touch their heart. You can't just preach the facts. Let's tell them a little story about how mother puts the candle in the window every night, hoping that the wandering boy will come home, and blow it out once and for all, or whatever he's supposed to do with it."

You will discover, if you have done any witnessing, that there are some people that you have explained this to again and again and again, and there is no response. They are blind, deaf, and dead. Then you have also found that you have talked to some people, and you've hardly gotten the words of the gospel out of your mouth, and they've said, "Gee, that's great. I believe that." And you look and you say, "How did you do that so fast?" And your mind is spinning, and you're thinking, "Now what did I say? The first thing I said was ..." So you grab a pencil and you start writing down what you said, and you can just see how you discovered a whole new technique that you can print and sell as a gospel witnessing training course because your message clicked with this person.

Well, what has happened to you, dear friend, is that you stumbled onto a person whom God the Holy Spirit had sanctified and set apart. He used you to bring the Word. Efficacious grace came into the life of that person, and bang! He believed, and entered the body of Christ. All you could do is stay out of the way. There are a lot of preachers who cannot get it through their heads to get out of the way and let God do His work. There are a lot of preachers who think (and they have trained their congregations to think) that they have not really done their job and they have not really had a good service if they haven't had a great big wing ding invitation at the end of the service.

We get people who come to this church sometimes, and very frequently they'll say, "One thing I don't like about Berean is that you never give an invitation." This is not true. We give an invitation. Anytime we have a sense that there are unsaved people in the service, we give a very strong invitation. However, what they mean is, "You don't ask anybody to raise a hand or to walk forward." That's what they mean by, "You don't have an invitation." But all of this is man-made gimmickry.

The objects of this efficacious grace, we have said, are the elect, and it is limited only to them (Romans 8:28-30) Efficacious grace is infallible. It works every time. Before the elect come to Christ, they may hear the gospel many times, but at the point that efficacious grace comes in, they believe, without any additional influence or anything more that we could add to that. God has chosen, and God brings them into His family.

The claim is often made, "Well if that's true what you're saying, then nobody's going to go out to talk to the unsaved. A Christian who learns this doctrine is going to get turned off. He's going to forget it. If it's God who has to do it, then there's nothing for you and me to do. We don't even have to be hustling out there with the Word." That's not true, because the person who is a genuine believer; who is doctrinally oriented; and, who is a spirit-filled believer will not be discouraged by this at all. As a matter of fact, when he discovers how effectively and how certainly God works, he is moved with all the more zeal to get that message out. The word is essential to salvation. He doesn't know who out there God has prepared with efficacious grace to bring into the family of God.

**The Effects of Effectual Grace**

There are certain practical effects to this doctrine. The divine purpose is magnified. Salvation is clearly the work of God when you understand this doctrine. You cannot hurry God into His program. That's another thing to be careful of--that you're going to hasten somebody's salvation. You're going to hustle somebody in. So you think up ways to get God to move a little faster. However, God has a program and a schedule, and He's going to work according to it. You may come up with a different program and a different schedule. As a matter of fact, you can discourage yourself by creating an ideal program and schedule that's just your creation, but it doesn't happen to be the Lord's. So you go to work, and you zero in on a person accordingly. However, God does not need your urgings. He does not need somebody with a little more personality. He does not need somebody with more glamorous techniques.

Evangelists are doing this all the time. Evangelists are forever concentrating on new techniques and new ways to hold public meetings. They have new ways to promote and to advertise. They have new ways to run the thing. Why? Because they want to propel people to get them to make the decision now. When has God ever told you that he's giving you a timetable as to when somebody is to be saved? All He has told us is to give him the Word. Explain the gospel to him and then back off, man. If you want to do anything, there's one very valuable thing you can do, and that is to pray that God, according to His schedule, will now take your words and bring conviction through God the Holy Spirit and operate in efficacious grace to lead this person into salvation. That accomplishes something.

It's senseless, therefore, for you to be discouraged. This even applies to you people who are in clubs; you teachers in the academy; and, those of you who are instructors of the Word, when you get discouraged because somebody is not responding. You should realize that all God asks of you is to be in the position of being filled with the spirit so that you have performed your job; you have explained the Word; and, you have put the truth out under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and then whether people listen or don't listen; whether they reach out; whether they ignore; or, whether they are positive or negative, that's not your problem.

You remember the story I told you, don't you? There was a fellow who had a friend that he walked to work with. As they came into the office building, they had to walk under a little arcade where there was a balcony. On the balcony was a fellow who stood up there, and every time this man would walk under him, the man upstairs would spit on him. Every day he came to work and he walked under this arcade, he knew that guy was going to be up there, loaded and ready to spit on him as he came by. His friend kept walking with him when he'd go to work, and he'd see this, but he would never say a thing. He would walk right under and kind of keep an eye up there for bombs-away, and he would dodge. Finally, one day he said, "You know, I just have to ask you this. We've been walking under this thing for two weeks, and every day we come here, there's this joker standing up there waiting to spit on you, and you never do a thing about it." And the fellow said, "Why should I? That's his problem, not mine."

Now what is your problem and what is God's problem? It is easy to get tangled up as to whose problem is whose. God's problem is to do the saving. Your problem is to give out the information. You can get yourself awfully torn up and often discouraged because you come into a class and you say, "Now, you see, Lord, we're going to talk to 50 kids. We're going to get 25 kids to raise their hand for this purpose." So 24 kids raise their hands. You blew it, and you go home all discouraged and all down in the mouth because you set up something that wasn't God's timetable. How many people around here do you know who are young adults who were on the terror side when they were kids? You would have expected that they would never have amounted to anything. Now they're extremely promising, because God had a different schedule than you had. This is important--the senselessness of discouragement among Christians because we make our definition of how and when somebody is going to respond.

**Lydia**

An excellent example that would summarize everything that we've been saying about efficacious grace is found in Acts 16:14. The apostle Paul has received a vision from God. Paul and Silas were reaching out and trying to decide where they should go next in their ministry. Paul has this vision. He sees this man from Macedonia with his arms outstretched, asking him to come over and help him. So the gospel goes to Europe as the result of that incident. Paul and Silas move over to Macedonia. They come to the city of Philippi as a result of this vision. Saturday morning rolls around, and as is their custom, in order to make a point of contact, where are they going to make it? Where the Jewish believers gather. So they find where the Jewish synagogue group worship is taking place down by the riverside. Fine. That's a nice place to have a worship. When they get there, mind you, with this great vision in their eyes and ringing in their ears of the man's words, they come over and at this great big house is a wonderful man. They come to this seaside and there's a riverside meeting. And what do they find?

In Acts 16:13, they find a group of women: "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was accustomed to be made. And we sat down, and spoke unto the women who resorted there." Now that was really discouraging. That's like a lot of prayer meetings and a lot of church services are--all women and no men. Here a man called them to come over, and when they get there, what a letdown--just ladies. However, notice Acts 16:14: "A certain named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God."

**Steps to Salvation**

In the stages of Lydia's movement from a condition where she is unsaved to where she is a believer, what makes her believe in Christ?

1. **Common Grace**

First, she "worshipped God." She had been exposed to monotheism, to the Hebrew faith. She was probably a proselyte; she had received Judaism; and, now she was the recipient of common grace. She worshipped God. She knew He was there. She had that information. She had this sense of God.

1. **The Gospel**

Then, "She heard us." The second step in her salvation was the preaching of the Word. Paul explained to her and to the ladies there the gospel. While Lydia may have been a believer under the Old Testament system, like those disciples of John that Paul found in the book of Acts who were still under the Old Testament Judaism system of believers that had to be transferred over into the body of Christ, they had to have the information concerning Christ. So Lydia had to have that information to move over from salvation on Old Testament Judaism ground to being on New Testament grace ground into the body of Christ. So she heard him, as Paul related from the great passages of the Old Testament relating them to the life of Jesus Christ. The general calling had brought the Word of God now into her mind.

1. **Efficacious Grace**

Next, "whose heart the Lord opened." Here was efficacious grace taking place. She heard the gospel. She heard the Word. Now, at this point, what she has taken into her mentality, what she has understood as the gospel, even though perhaps she had some resistance and some doubt about listening to this Paul who was telling her something so dramatic that the Old Testament way was dead, and God was now working through a whole new set up under Christianity. Yet, in spite of that, efficacious grace came in, and her heart was opened by the Lord. She didn't open it. It was not a movement of her will.

1. **Faith**

The next step was, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." That's faith. That's positive volition. At this point, she is saved. Efficacious grace has performed its work.

1. **Identification**

Next, "And when she was baptized (the testimony to her salvation)." This is an act of identification. And, by the way, dear friends, this is the only way that the Bible tells you to proclaim your faith. Do you realize that? The only way that the Bible says that you are to express your faith is through the act of water baptism. It does not tell you to express your faith by walking down an aisle; raising a hand; or, even giving a testimony at the point of conversion. You may give a testimony later to that. However, there is nothing in the Bible except this one act that expresses what has taken place in your mentality. That is water baptism. So she expresses that.

1. **Good Works**

"She was baptized, and her household, and then she besought us saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.' And she constrained us." The sixth step of her salvation was the expression in good works, following with hospitality to the missionary party. This was a reflection of love for the Lord's work, and that in itself distinguished her as one of the elect.

I think it is very very wonderful that God has provided efficacious grace, and that He makes it His business to seek out those whom he has chosen for eternal life. It is a great relief to know that because He called us; because He chose us; and, because our wills could not act apart from God the Holy Spirit preparing our wills, we could not move until sanctification had set us apart, and the Word of the gospel was brought to us. But having once experienced efficacious grace, there is no return. We cannot resist him; we accept; and, we can never lose it again. He brings His own unto Himself, and He shall never never leave them. They can never never be plucked out of his hands. Now that's the doctrine of efficacious grace.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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