

A TIGER, A RABBIT AND THE GRACE OF GOD

Everyone knows that tigers are meat eaters. They desire raw meat and they enjoy it when they get it. It's their nature. Now suppose you take a hungry tiger and give it a choice between a bowl of raw meat and a bowl of salad. Which one will the tiger choose? Well the answer is obvious. You can talk to the tiger about the benefits of eating a healthy salad until you are blue in the face; it will choose the raw meat every time. But doesn't it have a choice? Can't the tiger choose the salad if it wants to? Yes, but it doesn't want to. The tiger's will is governed by its nature. It desires the raw meat because it has a tiger's nature. Eating raw meat is natural for a tiger.

Now, to get the tiger to choose the salad instead of the raw meat, what would you have to do? You would have to change its nature. For example, suppose you have the power to turn the tiger into a rabbit. Now present the same choice, raw meat and salad. Which one will the rabbit choose? The rabbit will go for the salad every time. It wants to choose the salad because it has a rabbit's nature, and eating salad is natural for a rabbit.

You might be asking at this point, what does all of this have to do with the grace of God? The Bible teaches that we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23). Since the fall of Adam and Eve every human being, with the exception of Jesus, has entered this world with what we have come to call the "sin nature" or "fallen nature". We are corrupt to the core. The Bible tells us plainly that "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9 NKJV) Our very mindset is to rebel against our Creator, "*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*" (Ro 8:7 NKJV). We are sinners by nature and we desire to sin. Sinning comes natural to us. Remember the tiger and the meat?

When the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed to us we are confronted with a choice, a choice between life and death. The problem is not that we don't have a choice. The problem is that we, because of our sinful nature, will choose the wrong thing. "*As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.'*" (Ro 3:10-12 NKJV) Instead of life and righteousness in Christ, a sinner will choose self, sin and death every time. Just as the tiger does what its nature dictates, so we as sinners, act in a manner consistent with our fallen nature. How then, if we are all sinners, can anyone be saved? How can we choose Life? Is there hope?

This is where the grace of God comes in. All who believe the gospel and trust in Christ do so because God, in His grace, has given us a new nature.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*." (Ezek. 36:26-27 NKJV)

Just like the tiger in our illustration that we changed into a rabbit in order to get it to choose salad; we, by the power of the omnipotent God, are changed, converted, transformed, born again, so that we desire salvation through Jesus Christ. We have a new nature! We have no room to boast because we were truly helpless and hopeless in our former condition and, had it not been for the grace of God changing our hearts, we would have continued to choose death and finally perished. To God be the glory for His power to convert sinners into saints!

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