

## **DOCTRINE OF GAP (THE GRACE APPARATUS FOR PERCEPTION)**

- I. Introduction and preliminary considerations.
  - A. As one observes the world, it quickly becomes evident that believers and unbelievers view the world around them in very different ways.
  - B. The fact that perceptions are quite dissimilar may be observed in the ways in which believers and unbelievers operate and conduct their lives.
  - C. It is further evident that there are significant theological differences among the various groups in Christendom, which this doctrine is designed to explain, at least in part.
  - D. This doctrine is foundational to effectively living the Christian way of life, since an understanding of it is theologically critical to having a sound biblical anthropology.
  
- II. Definition and description of terms.
  - A. Pertinent vocabulary and definitions.
    1. **Dichotomous** is a technical term that describes the status of all unbelievers, who are in possession of only a physical body and soul.
    2. **Trichotomous** is a technical term that describes the status of all believers, who possess the physical body, soul, and human spirit.
    3. ψυχικός (psuchikos) is an adjective that is used 6 times in the New Testament; it refers to the natural physical life that is possessed by both men and animals.
      - a. It deals with physical life, which is manifested in breathing, and pertains to the natural world and what belongs in it; this is in contrast to the spiritual world and the realities in it.
      - b. It is used once as a technical term to refer to the unbeliever, who is governed by the physical realities of life, and not by the Spirit of God. ICor. 2:14
      - c. The acrostic **NAP** is used to refer to the natural apparatus for perception, which can only perceive those things that come through the five senses; the natural man cannot perceive or understand spiritual things.
    4. σαρκικός (sarkikos) is an adjective that is used 7 times in the New Testament; it means that which belongs to the flesh, that which is fleshly.
      - a. It is derived from the Greek noun σάρξ (sarx), and refers to the physical substance that covers animal and human bodies. ICor. 15:39
      - b. The adjective is used to refer to the believer that lives under the influence and/or control of his fleshly nature. ICor. 3:3
      - c. Since the sin nature is located in the genetics of the flesh (Rom. 7:18), this term is used to denote a believer that is under the domination of the old sin nature/STA.
    5. πνευματικός (pneumatikos) is an adjective that is used 26 times; it refers to that which is spiritual. When used of believers, it refers to one that is spiritual, one that is in fellowship, ruled by the Holy Spirit, with the sin nature isolated.
  - B. The acrostic **GAP** is an abbreviation for the grace apparatus for perception; it is used to refer to the internal constitution of believers following salvation, as well as the entire system for the perception and metabolization of Bible doctrine.

- C. Grace is not only the title and policy of God's plan, it is the basis for the perception of God's Word.
- D. Grace is the method by which the believer receives God's blessings; man's requirement for apprehending God's grace is positive volition expressed through the system of faith, which is a non-meritorious system of thinking in which the merit lies in the object.
- E. Since God operates through a system of grace and faith in order to reveal Himself, human systems of perception that rely on factors other than grace should be dismissed.
  - 1. This specifically refers to human systems of learning that are based on human intelligence alone.
  - 2. If a high IQ was required in order to perceive and understand Bible doctrine, then logically only those with a high IQ could learn the truth and make the maturity adjustment.
  - 3. Paul makes it quite clear that cosmic systems of wisdom were of no value when it comes to perceiving and apprehending the truth of God. ICor. 2:1,8
  - 4. In fact, as we will document, the very nature of unbelievers makes it impossible for them to perceive and believe the truth, apart from Divine intervention.
- F. The grace apparatus for perception consists of two elements, coupled with one mechanic for rapidly becoming spiritual.
  - 1. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which each believer received at the point of salvation as part of the salvation package.
  - 2. The human spirit, which is regenerated at the point of salvation (Tit. 3:5); this restores the trichotomous state that Adam had prior to the fall. IThess. 5:23
  - 3. The rapid recovery system of rebound, which provides spiritual cleansing and instantaneous forgiveness of sins committed after salvation. IJn. 1:9
  - 4. This mechanic is the means by which one regains fellowship with God, which puts the Holy Spirit in the position of rulership, and isolates the sin nature.
- G. God provides the grace apparatus for perception so that each believer might learn those things that are freely given by God, and come to a complete knowledge of the truth. ICor. 2:12; ITim. 2:4
- H. When a believer is in fellowship, functioning under the grace apparatus for perception, and learning Bible doctrine, we also use the term GAP to refer to process.
- I. The believer is able to GAP the truth, but the unbeliever can only NAP the truth, which makes the true perception of God an impossibility.

- III. The documentation for this theological position is found in the book of First Corinthians. ICor. 2:9-13
  - A. Paul loosely quotes Isaiah 64:4 to document his position that Divine wisdom, and the perception of that wisdom, does not come from human sources. Vs. 9
  - B. He logically moves on to say that God must choose to reveal what He thinks, or mankind would never perceive God's wisdom. Vs. 10
  - C. He points out the fact that only the real you knows at any given time what you are thinking.
    - 1. This gnomic expression (short sayings that express basic truths) is one with which a thinking person would not argue.
    - 2. While a man knows what he thinks, no one knows what another person thinks, unless that person chooses to reveal his thoughts.
    - 3. Anyone can cover his true thoughts with an overt façade, which may simply be designed to disguise his thinking and motives. Prov. 26:24-26

- D. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the only one that can truly know what God thinks would have to be God Himself. Vs. 11b
- E. The Third Person of the Godhead is not only privy to what God thinks, He is the One whom God has appointed to reveal that information to mankind. Vs. 10
- F. The anthropopathism of **searching** is used to indicate the omniscience and veracity of the Holy Spirit, Who faithfully and accurately communicates the thinking of God to the human race. Vs. 10b; Jn. 16:13-15
- G. The **spirit of the world** refers to the thinking that dominates the fallen world, manipulated and deceived by Satan. Vs. 12
1. The cosmic, human systems of education, wisdom, and philosophy, which are based on human systems of intelligence, are not sufficient to provide mankind an accurate understanding of God and His plan.
  2. The natural apparatus for perception is the only means of perception that unregenerate humanity has available.
  3. However, the NAP system is contaminated with the genetic STA, which can only distort the truth, and tends to reject the things of God.
  4. Therefore, those dominated by the spirit of the world and the natural apparatus for perception cannot accurately perceive or understand the things of God.
  5. While the principle of human intelligence is not bad in itself, those that have only cosmic wisdom tend to be arrogant and reject spiritual realities. Vs. 14
  6. Percentage wise, not many of those with great human intelligence possess positive volition. ICor. 1:26
- H. One of the primary reasons each believer received the indwelling ministry of God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation was so that he could learn the thoughts of God. ICor. 2:12
1. The fact that **we have received the Spirit who is from God** is documentation for the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.
  2. This Spirit is distinct from and antagonistic to **the spirit of the cosmos**, governed strictly by human systems of thinking that view the Divine viewpoint as foolishness. ICor. 2:14
  3. The purpose clause is introduced by ἵνα (hina), which is followed by the subjunctive mood of the verb **know**; this is designed to convey the fact that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not the only issue in learning God's truths. Vs. 12
  4. Other factors that must be considered are the volition of the student, his willingness to orient to God's system, humility, consistency, having a qualified teacher, and whether or not he understands and uses the mechanic to isolate the sin nature.
  5. The doctrines that comprise the faith are **freely given to us by God** through the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit, which indicates that grace is still a most important aspect of learning the thoughts of God.
- I. Although God the Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of doctrine, He has chosen to communicate to Church Age believers through human communicators. ICor. 2:13
- J. Those that reject the authority of the pastor-teacher, who was established in his canon by the Holy Spirit, manifest a rejection of the very system that the Holy Spirit has established. Acts 20:28; IPet. 5:2
- K. Verse 13 also documents the fact that God has chosen to communicate His plan using a particular vocabulary, which is designed to communicate spiritual doctrines by means of technical spiritual language.

- IV. The natural man. ICor. 2:14
- A. The natural man is a term that is used by Paul to refer to the unbeliever that resides in the realm of spiritual death, ruled by the genetic sin nature. Rom. 5:12,21
  - B. Since he lacks the grace apparatus for perception (he has no human spirit and is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit), he is incapable of discerning or assimilating spiritual information.
  - C. Paul makes it clear that **he cannot understand them**; this means that he cannot come to the knowledge of the truth since he is incapable of receiving, learning, or grasping the significance of spiritual information.
  - D. The only exception to this reality occurs at the point of gospel hearing, when the Holy Spirit acts to present the issues related to salvation. Jn. 16:7-9
  - E. Therefore, it is not productive to attempt to discuss any area of the Divine viewpoint with an unbeliever; the gospel is the only doctrine that he can grasp.
  - F. While an unbeliever may have a predilection for religion, philosophy, science, psychology, or any other discipline, he ultimately views the Divine viewpoint as foolishness.
  - G. He may cover his thoughts with polite and measured responses; nevertheless, he finds the information to be lacking in truth or credibility, since he does not possess the ability to evaluate spiritual matters.
  - H. The wisdom of the natural men is linked to natural life on earth, dependent upon human abilities and IQ, and tied to the fallacious thinking of demons. James 3:15
    1. The “**wisdom**” that permeates the cosmos is called **earthly**, indicating that the organized systems of human wisdom are tied to the earthly scheme of things; it is contrasted with the wisdom that comes from Heaven.
    2. The fact that it is **natural** demonstrates that it comes from the realm of unbelievers, unregenerate men that are dominated by their sin natures.
    3. The final adjective, **demonic**, documents that the earthly systems of wisdom and philosophy are consistent with the thinking of fallen angels. ITim. 4:1-3
  - I. He is finally contrasted with the **spiritual man**, the regenerate man, the believer possessing the grace apparatus for perception and metabolized doctrine.
  - J. Finally, the natural man cannot effectively question/evaluate/judge the spiritual man, since he lacks the frame of reference or the internal apparatus to do so.
  - K. Further, neither the natural man, nor the carnal believer, can effectively judge the positive, advancing believer, since the STA always prejudices the evaluation.
- V. The grace provision for learning the plan of God in the Church Age.
- A. In order to communicate His thoughts to the human race, God has chosen to record His revelation in the objective words of the Scripture.
  - B. Therefore, the first aspect of God’s grace provision for learning His plan is the formation and preservation of the completed canon of Scripture.
    1. The thoughts of God were communicated, through the principle of revelation, to positive men that were enabled to record the Divine revelation without any error or imperfection. Ex. 17:14; Jer. 30:2; Rev. 1:11
    2. This mysterious process was not as simple as mere dictation; it did not override the volition, personality, history, or any other aspect of the human author.
    3. This process resulted in an inspired text that was free from human error (doctrine of inerrancy), and whose inspiration extended to the very words of Scripture. IITim. 3:16

4. Throughout the course of human history, other positive believers gathered the inspired material, and rejected that which was spurious.
  5. The final result was the completed canon of Scripture, which has been preserved in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments in accordance with the promise of Jesus Christ. Matt. 5:18, 24:35
- C. God has provided the only authorized environment for the dissemination and teaching of His Word in this dispensation.
1. The local church, not any other organization, is the medium, which God Himself has chosen and established to advance His plan. ICor. 4:17; ITim. 3:15
  2. Face-to-face teaching is the format that God has ordained, and is superior to all other forms of communication. IIJn. 12
    - a. The apostles recognized that their own epistles to local churches were not the ideal; they simply served to encourage believers in the interim until the apostle could be personally present. IThess. 2:17-18, 3:2,10
    - b. If the written correspondence from the highest ranking authority in the Church Age was an inferior form of communication, where does that leave other forms of communication like books, television, radio, etc.?
    - c. Beyond that, apart from active personal participation in a local church, one cannot effectively fulfill many of the Royal imperatives. Heb. 10:25
  3. The independent, autonomous local church, with a pastoral form of government is the norm that is promoted by the New Testament; denominations are not.
    - a. Denominations (as well as other aberrations) undermine the principle of authority, and the Royal Chain of Command.
    - b. Denominations often pressure the pastor-teacher to parrot the doctrines of that denomination, rather than teach all the doctrines contained in the Word of God.
    - c. The fear of excommunication from the denomination has led most to avoid the truth of certain matters, and teach only the doctrines that are accepted or approved by the denomination.
    - d. Therefore, sound ministries have left the denominational camp; they are willing to bear the reproach of teaching the **whole purpose of God**. Heb. 13:13; Acts 20:27
  4. Those that reject the principle or function of the local church are obviously out of touch with the very dispensation in which they live (the Church Age), and cannot ultimately be successful spiritually.
    - a. Spiritual mavericks, loners, or renegades, who become a law to themselves, reject authority, and reject God's system, often continue to manifest the delusion that they are pleasing to God. IITim. 3:8-9,13
    - b. Further, they will learn at the Bema seat what the positive, adjusted believer has learned and embraced in time; one must compete according to the established rules. IITim. 2:5
- D. For the vast majority of the Church Age, God has provided each local church with precisely one spiritual leader as part of grace. Eph. 4:7,11; Rev. 2,3
1. As is consistent with the pastoral analogies in the New Testament, each flock (congregation) can only have and respond to one shepherd. Jn. 10:4-5; ITim. 3:1
  2. The pastor-teacher is selected by God the Holy Spirit, established in the appropriate canon, and supported throughout his ministry. Acts 20:28

- a. This principle demands that any man that is prepared for the ministry not resort to inappropriate tactics in order to obtain a congregation; he must be humbly willing to wait until such time as the Holy Spirit brings him together with his congregation.
  - b. This also indicates that the pastor-teacher is not simply an employee that may be hired and fired like other employees; believers need to understand the principle that lifting a hand against God's appointed leader is not only wrong, it can be dangerous. ISam. 24:6; IICor. 10:7-11, 12:21-13:2
  - c. Although the pastor-teacher is the ranking authority in the local church, God has provided deacons to support him in the administration of the local church. Acts 6:1ff
  - d. While the pastor-teacher may rely on the insight of other positive believers (deacons and those in the congregation at large), he alone is responsible for shepherding and teaching the congregation. IPet. 5:1-4
3. God supernaturally supports, sustains, and guides the positive pastor-teacher; the pastor-teacher that diligently seeks to fulfill his ministry before the Lord will be blessed with insight, understanding, the knowledge of where to teach, what to teach, and how to teach. Matt. 7:7-11
  4. God has always used human communicators in every dispensation, each of whom was different in personality, style, experience, etc.; however, each of them possessed an active sin nature. James 5:17
    - a. One man is not only responsible to feed the flock and look after their spiritual well-being; he is fully capable of providing sufficient doctrine to get his sheep to maturity. ITim. 4:16
    - b. Those that reject the principle of one, spiritually appointed pastor-teacher often do so with the arrogant suggestion that one man cannot teach them the truth and take them to maturity.
    - c. This type of believer often manifests his spiritual instability and inconsistency with the assertion that only he can really determine what the truth is; therefore, he becomes his own teacher!
    - d. How can any believer know that he can trust one man with his spiritual well-being? Ask Noah, Moses, Elijah, or Paul.
    - e. All communicators must be evaluated on the content of the teaching; other factors such as personality, likes, dislikes, hobbies, etc. are not part of that criterion.
  - E. As stated previously, there is one mechanic provided in the GAP process; God has provided the rapid recovery system of rebound. IJn. 1:9
  - F. This is the only method by which a believer with a functional and active sin nature can regain fellowship with God, learn His plan, and be prepared to execute within that plan.

## VI. The stages of GAP.

- A. The first stage of GAP begins with the pastor-teacher and the study-teach routine; this is comprised of private study and public proclamation. IITim. 2:15
  1. The pastor-teacher must himself be a positive believer, who desires to know the truth, and seeks the necessary wisdom. James 1:5
  2. He must be prepared spiritually, intellectually, and academically to interpret the word of God; this involves knowledge of the languages of Scripture, biblical history, sound hermeneutics, and a good doctrinal foundation.

3. The acrostic ICE has been commonly used to refer to the proper approach; however, in terms of actual order EIC is more accurate.
  - a. The first step in this process is the study of the Scripture from the original languages in which they were written.
  - b. This allows the pastor-teacher to ascertain the correct translation he must determine the meaning of every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and book in the context in which they were written.
  - c. The second step, isagogics, refers to the fact that one must understand the historical context in which a particular passage was written.
  - d. The final step is the categorization of the individual doctrines that are taught throughout the Bible; all doctrines must be harmonized, since Scripture does not contradict Scripture.
4. The pastor-teacher must be intellectually honest with respect to his doctrinal grid; he should not be inordinately bound to his own thinking, but must be willing to let the text speak for itself.
5. Following his prayer for wisdom and preparation in the study, the next step in this process involves teaching the Divine viewpoint to his congregation.
  - a. This is to be done in the authorized environment of the local assembly.
  - b. A careful study of the New Testament demonstrates that teaching was done via monologue, which is still the finest way to communicate information to a receptive audience.
    - 1.) Jesus largely executed His teaching via monologue, and did not respond kindly to interruptions. Matt. 5:1-7:27; Lk. 11:28
    - 2.) Paul executed his teaching ministry via monologue. Acts 20:7-11
    - 3.) The term ὁ λόγος (ho logos), which is found at the end of verse 7, has the sense of a speech.
    - 4.) The very Greek term κήρυξ (kerux—herald) is most often translated **preacher**, and denoted an official that was charged with delivering public monologues or proclamations for kings, magistrates, or military commanders.
    - 5.) Each pastor in Revelation 2 and 3 was evidently to read the message from the Lord, and deliver it to his congregation.
  - c. While the physical location of the assembly is not the critical issue, the pastor-teacher should seek to establish and maintain an environment that is as conducive to learning as it can be.
    - 1.) The environment should be as free from external distractions as possible.
    - 2.) The pastor-teacher is not to tolerate distractions from those that are assembled; he is to enforce good manners, poise, and overt humility.
- B. The second step in this process is for believers to take in the Word of God in the authorized environment.
  1. This begins with believers assembling together. Heb. 10:25
  2. Each believer is responsible to comply with the overt decorum necessary for conducting Bible classes; however, he is to supply true humility. James 1:19-21
  3. Each believer is responsible to judge himself rightly, ensuring that he is in fellowship with the sin nature isolated. James 1:21; IJn. 1:9

4. The objective at this stage is to get the information into the analysis center of the soul, so one can accurately evaluate the information apart from STA discoloration or contamination.
  5. This requires that each believer is positive, assembled, humble, in fellowship, concentrating on the information, and seeking to comprehend it.
  6. Each believer must then consider the information and documentation, reflect on it, and determine if it is sound.
    - a. A believer should not reject information simply because it is new, or because he has not heard it previously.
    - b. Believers should not reject information based on the absurd notion that another pastor-teacher has not taught it.
    - c. Each believer must be very careful not to reject information that goes against him personally; each believer has his own STA problems, and the pastor-teacher is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort from time to time.
    - d. The goal is to simply evaluate the information in an intellectually honest fashion, see if the documentation is sufficient, and if it harmonizes with other truth.
- C. The third stage of this process is applying faith to the doctrine taught.
1. The first thing each believer must do is listen to the entire teaching with an open mind before attempting to evaluate it or pass judgment on it. Prov. 18:13
  2. Positive volition places its faith in the truth that is taught; negative volition rejects the truth and may seek to rationalize rejection of the doctrine.
  3. As a believer applies faith toward the truth, he reprograms the brain computer with the Divine viewpoint of life. Prov. 3:3, 7:3; Rom. 12:2
  4. The believer uses this information to form a new frame of reference (Eph. 4:23), a new conscience that is programmed with God's norms and standards (ITim. 1:5,19), and the new man grows. IICor. 4:16
  5. The ability to understand doctrinal concepts grows in proportion to one's frame of reference and level of spiritual advance.
- D. The fourth stage in this process is the application of the doctrine learned.
1. All doctrine that the believer learns will be tested. IPet. 1:6-7
  2. Failure to apply the doctrine learned not only results in sin (James 4:17), but will hamper spiritual progress toward the maturity adjustment. Heb. 5:12-14
  3. Application of the doctrine one has learned is called justification by works (James. 2:14-26); however, it must be recognized that this does not refer to Ph<sub>1</sub> justification, which involves the imputation of God's righteousness apart from works. Rom. 3:24,28
  4. It should be evident that each of the previous three stages is necessary for one to produce Divine good and accrue the attendant SG<sub>3</sub>; in that regard, eternal rewards are contingent upon the doctrine one learns in Bible class.
- E. The fifth stage of GAP is the maturity adjustment. Mk. 4:28
1. It is important to recognize that spiritual maturity is a goal, but it is not the end for the positive believer.
  2. The final objective for the mature believer is to complete his course by running his race to the end of his Ph<sub>2</sub>. IITim. 4:7
  3. Maturity is a state of spiritual growth that is attained over time as a result of faithfully hearing and applying the Word of God. Eph. 4:13; James 1:25



4. The goal of all adjusted communicators is to present mature believers before the Lord at the Bema Seat. Eph. 4:12-15; Col. 1:28

- VII. Various forms of negative volition are capable of undermining the entire GAP system.
- A. Since the process for each believer begins with the proper instruction, any believer that places his faith in an unbelieving pastor-teacher will suffer loss. Matt. 24:45
  - B. Those that fall prey to unscrupulous teachers that have gone negative, such as Hymenaeus and Alexander, will not ultimately grow to maturity. I Tim. 1:19-20
  - C. The believer that refuses to assemble manifests that he is unwilling to hear the truth. Heb. 10:25
  - D. The believer that assembles but fails to isolate the sin nature will distort the truth of doctrine along the lines of his sinful trends, and may not grow beyond a point. James 1:21
  - E. The arrogant believer makes himself an enemy of God; this is manifested by an unwillingness to receive the Word being implanted with humility. James. 1:21, 4:6
  - F. The believer that assembles but does not apply faith toward the truth manifests a refusal to believe. which will hinder or destroy spiritual growth. Matt. 21:32; Jude 1:5
  - G. The believer that assembles and believes the doctrine, yet does not follow through and apply the doctrine, comes under temporal and operational death. James 2:17-20
  - H. Negative volition at any point in the GAP process effectively destroys the process of spiritual growth, and may result in the appropriate form of Divine judgment. I Cor. 11:31-32 cf. II Thess. 2:12

*“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*

ICor. 2:12-13