

1998 Summer Lecture Series (Carson City, NV)  
An Introduction to Reformed Theology (#4)  
Sola Gratia: The Supremacy of Grace in Salvation  
June 29, 1998

## **INTRODUCTION: Eph. 2:1-10**

Sola Gratia is an umbrella slogan. If Soli Deo Gloria gives us the ultimate purpose of God in all things, so Sola Gratia gives us God's *modus operandi* in the execution of that purpose.

Tonight will be like a coast to coast flight at 35,000 feet. No time to stop, just to look out the window. We will stop in coming weeks and linger, but Sola Gratia is so vast and comprehensive, that is really is the rest of the series in a nutshell.

Definition of grace: John Murray, 119

### **I. The Need of Grace**

Grace only makes sense when we understand our need of it. Much of the distortions concerning grace flow directly out of a wrong understanding of the need itself. Take for instance the view of grace as simply what God contributes to the cooperative effort He has going with man. You have your part, God has His part, called grace. Grace follows behind, tightening up the loose strings. Grace comes at the end of the marathon and empowers you to make that final 100 yards. Grace is seen as cooperating with your best efforts in order to give final success. This is not grace. This is theological fiction. As we shall see, God and man are not in a co-op together. Grace doesn't wait in the wings to shore up your short-comings. Grace has nothing to do with cooperation!

Our need of grace is rooted completely in our total depravity. If you do not understand total depravity, you will never understand grace!

1. We are **dead** in trespasses and sin, not merely suffering from a viral infection! Eph. 2:1-3
2. We are **rebellious** against God by nature, not confused yet earnest seekers of truth. We look for God like a thief looks for a cop! Rom. 3:10-11
3. We are **enslaved** to sin by nature, not people with free wills (John 8:34; Titus 3:3).
4. We are **corrupt** in our affections and mind (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7).

We are like Lemmings! By nature we are burning calories ferociously to fly over the precipice! Never has a lemming stopped and said, "This is madness, these fellow creatures are flinging themselves over to their death. I am smarter than that, my will is free, I won't go that way, I'll go to club med!"

It is only until we see ourselves in the totality of our depravity that we can begin to appreciate grace!

### **II. Electing Grace**

1. If we are to understand grace, we must understand that if God had desired to take the entire lot of dead, rebellious, enslaved and corrupt humanity and judge them and send them to hell, He would be totally just! What happened to the fallen angels? Any redemption? Any

grace? No, only eternal condemnation! And God is completely holy and just in their damnation. So as we look at Grace Planned, we cannot cry "Foul! Unfair!" For if God were to give the whole lot of Adam's race what was fair, no one would be saved!

2. The grace of election took place in eternity past, when God the father out of His own good pleasure chose some of Adam's fallen race to be the objects of His grace (Eph. 1:3-6).

3. This election was not on the basis of anything in us, but rather according to grace (2 Tim. 1:8-9; Rom. 11:5-6).

4. This election is not based on foreseen faith, foreseen works, or foreseen anything. If it was, first, you never would have been chosen! Second, it wouldn't be according to grace it would be according to something it you! (Rom. 9:16)

5. Back to our lemmings. The grace of election is like god, looking down at humanity in Adam, and in His grace he decides to save some of these hell-bound lemmings, but not all. The rest are let to go their own way, the elect however, are marked out by grace to be saved.

### **III. Redeeming Grace**

Those whom God chose are still dead, rebellious, depraved sinners who need redemption! And so in God's matchless grace, He sends forth His Son to redeem them! Here is the pre-eminent display of Grace! Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:7-8

### **IV. Regenerating Grace**

Electing grace is wonderful, but it does not actually save anybody, it simply marks out those who will be saved. Electing grace, secured by the death of Christ on the Cross, is applied by the Holy Spirit through regenerating grace. That is, God the Holy Spirit takes the dead, rebellious, enslaved and corrupt sinner (depraved) and opens blinds eyes, gives a new heart, changes the disposition, so that the sinner can receive Christ through repentance and faith! Regeneration is an act of sovereign grace!  
John 1:12-13; 3:3-5; Rom. 9:16; Jas. 1:18

### **V. Saving Graces Grace**

Regenerating is the cause for the saving graces of repentance and faith. Not the reverse!  
Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; Acts 16:14; Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25  
John Murray, 120

### **VI. Justifying Grace**

Once the regenerated sinners believes, God as act of grace justifies the believing sinner. In justification, God acquits the sinner of his guilt and sin and imputes the righteousness of Christ to them.

Rom. 3:24

\*Justification as pardon and imputation

### **VII. Sanctifying Grace**

Another perversion of grace views grace simply as divine leniency for those who make a profession of faith. It is free pardon from sin and guilt with no strings attached. It is a get out of jail free card to anyone with brains enough to snatch one up. It is eternal fire insurance, the policy of course, may stay tucked away until time of death. It makes no demands, it possesses no

power to transform only to acquit. This is not grace either. This is theological contortionist.

The bible is clear, the grace which justifies is also the grace which sanctifies, that is, progressively makes holy! Although justification and sanctification are distinct works of grace, they can never be separated from the other.

Titus 2:11-12

### **VIII. Sufficient Grace**

Anyone who knows the life of faith, knows that there are trials and temptation. All of God's elect throughout the ages have experienced dark nights of the soul and thorns in the flesh. It is in this area of need that we experience sufficient grace. Sufficient grace is grace which comes to us in our poverty and weakness and bears us up, it does not miraculously remove the trial or thorn, but gives faith and endurance to overcome.

2 Cor, 12:7-11

### **IX. Restraining Grace**

This is the grace which saves us from ourselves! Oh how we underestimate remaining corruption! (Plug Owen). Right here is where we need deep understanding of grace and our own nature.

Psa. 19:12-13;

### **X. Persevering Grace**

This the grace of eternal security, although it is more than just eternal security. It is the grace which comes to God's elect and causes them to keep faith and not commit apostasy. God's true elect will never fall away, rather they will endure to the end and be saved.

Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:5; Rom. 8:29-30

Conclusion

Grace. Free Grace. Sovereign Grace. Matchless Grace. Grace which began before the foundations of the world and grace which will have no end.

Soli Deo Gloria absolutely necessitates Sola Gratia! Rom. 11:5-6; Eph. 2:8-9