

The 5 Solas: Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) Eph 2:1-10; Rom 3:23-24; 5:2; Titus 2:11-14

INTRODUCTION

The Reformation is much bigger and broader than Martin Luther. There were other key figures before Luther including John Hus and John Wycliffe. Both were burned at the stake as heretics for preaching what we call the one true gospel, or in Wycliffe's case, translating the Bible into English. But this indicates the religious culture of the day in the Western Church. The Western Church is distinguished from the Eastern Church. These split in 1054 and that is why as you drive around town you see Orthodox Churches (Eastern) and Catholic Churches (Western). Did you realize all the church history that's around you as your drive around our community?

The Western Church in the early 16th century was led by Leo X. He was from the famous Italian Medici family of Florence. This was the height of the Renaissance. Pope Leo was the one who hired Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He was the Pope trying to build St. Peter's Basilica, the biggest church in the world even to this day. Michelangelos and colossal Basilicas came at a very high cost and Pope Leo was desperate for money.

Enter now into the story Albert of Brandenburg.

Albert was a bishop, but he wanted to be archbishop in Germany. But he didn't qualify, yet money talks. So, Albert met with Pope Leo X and offered him a massive sum of money to be archbishop. Leo, needing the money, agreed. Albert didn't have the money, so he borrowed it from a German bank but now had a huge debt to pay. How would he do it?

Enter a third character: a monk named Tetzel.

Tetzel became Albert's fundraiser, and they devised a scheme where Tetzel would go into the towns and villages and sell what were known as "indulgences." An indulgence was essentially a get-out-of-so-called-purgatory card or a grace card for a past or future sin for you or a family member. These indulgences and their sale were endorsed by Pope Leo. What better way to raise money than to monetize the grace of God?

Tetzel was a marketer and even developed a jingle to help sell them: *"As soon as a coin in the coffer rings / the soul from purgatory springs."* Luther was dismayed at both the indulgences and the church culture that permitted them. So, Luther composed a list of 95 grievances with the church and indulgences and on October 31, 1517, he nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church the 95 theses. This was the 16th century version of posting a blog. It got it out there for public debate. Reformation fever swept through Western Europe. Other figures were highly influential like Zwingli, Calvin and John Knox. They preached and preached and wrote and wrote. They "protested" the teachings of the Western Church, hence the title Protestants. It is sometimes called the Protestant Reformation. There is so, so much more but that is a quick history.

Let's get into our subject today as we continue our series on The Five Solas. Sola. What does that mean? Sola is Latin. It means *"alone."* For example, solitary comes from this root word. Over the years, the doctrines of the Reformation were summarized in "Solas." Here they are in Latin with their English counterparts: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone), Solus Christus (Christ alone), Soli Deo Gloria (God's Glory Alone). In each of these categories, the Reformers identified additions that had been made. They said, *"No, you cannot add to Scripture. You cannot add to grace. You cannot add to faith, Christ, and God's glory. Add to these and you have fundamentally changed the gospel."*

Putting it all together, we can confidently state: *"According to the authority of Scripture alone, we are justified (saved) by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone."* Amen?

Last week we considered **Sola Scriptura. Scripture alone is the final and highest authority.** Today is Sola Gratia or or grace alone. Scripture alone clarifies final authority. Grace alone deals with the all-important question of how we are saved from hell to eternal life—the very nature of the gospel. Right there we see why the stakes on this are so high. They last forever and ever. **Get the gospel wrong and you are damned**

and judged by God forever. Get it right and forever you experience the bliss of God's love and life.

For this morning, let's divide our study in two parts.

First, please note...

I. Sola Gratia: _____

In theological terms, there are two types of grace: **common grace and saving grace**. *Common grace* is the favor that God gives to all people. Generally, it is manifested in the way God provides sunshine, rain, shelter, food, government, laws, general health, etc. Common grace extends to every person.

On the other hand, *saving grace* is that favor from God expressed upon those whom He has chosen for salvation. This expression of grace results in salvation; hence we have such verses as **Ephesians 1:11**, "*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.*" We, the chosen, have had the blessing of saving grace bestowed on us in abundance. But this grace is not a substance. It is not a thing that can be transferred, bestowed, or earned. Grace is not a commodity or a substance that can be infused, lost, and regained.

Since we are going to be talking a lot about grace, let's begin by defining the **term: God's grace is unmerited favor; the non-entitled saving _____ of God. To really gain an appreciation from Sola Gratia, you need to understand two things—the _____ of sin and the _____ of Christ.**

These two realities are clearly seen in **Ephesians 2**. Go ahead and turn in your Bible to **Ephesians 2:1-10**.

Three observations about this text and Sola Gratia:

A. Sola Gratia drives us to our spiritual

_____ and _____ apart from God's _____
(Eph 2:1-3)

The starting point of the gospel is the opposite of the basic understanding of human nature popular in society today. The contemporary starting point is that man is basically good and with the right upbringing and education and opportunities, he or she will be an upstanding contributor to society's goodness. Therefore, when someone steals, lies, or murders, it is a failure of society to nurture the good instead of the evil. The solution is educational opportunities or better healthcare or better parenting.

But the gospel doesn't say that we are good people who need nurturing; rather that we are by nature rebels against God. We are dead in our sin. Our basic nature is toward what is immoral and violent and depraved. When we lie, steal, slander, abuse, or do violence, we are acting according to our nature.

Sola Gratia drives us to our spiritual depravity and desperation apart from God's grace...next,

B. Sola Gratia says our _____ to win back God just don't _____ (Isaiah 64:6)

After presenting the pitiful condition of humanity's depravity, Paul turns from us to God. Thankfully, **Ephesians 2** doesn't stop with our depravity.

Here's some good news...

C. Sola Gratia says _____ is totally of God from first to last (Ephesians 2:4-9)

- "It is the gift of God."
- It is also a muzzle.
"So that no man can boast."

Sola gratia explained...next please note...

II. Sola Gratia: _____

Go back to **Titus 2:11-14**. Please note that the grace of God saves – **2:11**. The application of that salvation is seen in **vv. 12-14**.

Please note that...

A. The grace that the _____ is the grace that _____ (2:12)

B. The grace that the saves is the grace that trains and is the grace that prepares (2:13-14)

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning?

Take these concluding thoughts with you:

1. We are saved entirely by God

"*Justified by grace*" means that God declares us righteous without anything in us contributing or inclining Him to do so. God is the giver, and we are the receivers.

What keeps grace from being sentimentality or God just being nice to us? How God did it. He didn't wink. He didn't overlook anything. He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. The cross is God taking sin on and overcoming it. But at an infinite price. One author put it this way, "*Sin is violent lethal rebellion against God; and biblical grace is God's violent, raw, and bloody response.*" (Trueman, *Grace Alone: Salvation as a Gift of God*, p. 11) Jesus' blood brings God's grace to us and pays the price God's holiness required so that God's grace could apply it to us. In this respect, there is nothing nice and sweet about grace, at least not God's grace.

2. We remain saved by God's grace

I mentioned earlier that assurance of salvation was absent from the medieval church. How can I know if I have done enough? Worked hard enough? The answer from the church was that if your life was good enough you would in the end be justified.

Luther was terrified of dying. *How could he know that he had done enough? Worked hard enough? Been morally good enough?* But then **Sola Gratia** stepped into his understanding. If I am saved by grace apart from anything I do to earn it or deserve it, then my assurance is not based on my performance but on God's grace to save. I enter salvation by His grace alone. I remain in salvation forever by His grace alone. It is God's grace alone from first to last. Herein is our assurance. **Only in heaven will we truly and fully appreciate salvation by grace alone** for if it were possible for me to gaze into hell and realize that is what I deserved but eternal life is what I have, forever, and ever, and ever. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that save a wretch like me. **Sola Gratia!**