

Sola Gratia (“By Grace Alone”)

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- Paul describes the condition of our lives apart from Jesus--we choose sin, rebellion, and destruction;

- We, from the beginning, rebelled against God (*Genesis 3*) and Scripture speaks about us being born into sin—

 - *“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.” (Psalm 58:3)*

 - *“None is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10b-12)*

- Paul goes on to say that (1) we have an enemy and his name is Satan and his desire is for God to be robbed of His glory and for you to die and (2) despite Satan’s plans, you and I choose our sin;

- Satan may tempt us but ultimately, we are the ones that choose sin and death;

- This description is either (1) who you are right now apart from Christ or (2) who you were before Christ;

- Our merit, self-righteous acts, and morals have earned us death. And the truth is that apart from the saving work of Jesus, the wrath of God is upon us; no works can earn us salvation or could offset any of wickedness—

 - *“For the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23a)*

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- “But God, being rich in mercy...”; mercy is not receiving what we deserve; God steps in and not only extends His mercy, but saves us by His grace—

 - *“The Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked?’ Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Genesis 3:9-11)*

- Grace is unmerited favor from God; it is getting what we do NOT deserve; a gift given freely by God--one that cannot be earned or bought by us;
- The grace of God makes us alive--cleansed, forgiven, and make new;
- Grace, in the church, has been reduced to a watered down doctrine of “get out of hell and back to normal card..” grace is not a license to sin;
- Grace, in the Bible, is always connected to sacrifice--in order that grace may be obtained, gifted to us, something or someone had to die; blood was shed—

- *“The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:20-21)*

- In order for God to lavish us with the riches of His grace, God the Son, Jesus Christ, died--the ultimate and final sacrifice--grace is NOT cheap and Jesus paid really good money for those who belong to Him; His blood—

(1) *Grace is not cheap, but costly;*

(2) *Grace is God taking action;*

(3) *Grace is a gift from God, necessary for salvation--*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

- We did not contribute to our salvation; grace, faith, and Jesus Christ are inextricably connected—

- *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people...” (Titus 2:11)*

- In order for our hearts to be made new, we must have been given the gift of grace so that we could receive the gift of faith that is only made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus!

- You and I cannot boast in anything except Jesus; to do so would be to rob God of His glory—

- *“...as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” (1 Corinthians 1:31)*

- We did not earn His grace; our works cannot merit His love for us—

- *“In Him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:7);*

(1) *We are dead in our sins and by the grace of God, we are made alive;*

(2) *Grace is Jesus personified;*

(3) *God's grace indicatively determines identity--*

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

- The gracious work of Jesus has real implications--we are given a new heart, a new identity;
- Grace not only changes who we are but transforms how we live—

- "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." (Titus 2:11-14)

- How we live brings testimony to the grace of God--it is because God already loves us that we do good works and are not enslaved to sin; grace brings us into relationship with God and we are empowered by His grace--we can say No to sin; your life is not without meaning; everything you do has meaning--works are a good thing and they are a result of a new heart—

- "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." (John 17:4)

- "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Final Thoughts

- The gift of grace alone saves us and thus conquers death and brings forth a new creation;
- The gift of grace alone empowers and transforms us, conforming us into the image of Jesus.