

Theme: Sin has corrupted humans so thoroughly that we can only be saved because of grace - God's undeserved merciful kindness and favor - alone.

I. Intro - Luther's Struggle With Sin & Grace

- A. Luther - I was a good monk and kept my order so strictly that I could say that if ever a monk could get to heaven through monastic discipline, I should have entered in. All my companions in the monastery who knew me would bear me out in this. For if it had gone on much longer, I would have martyred myself to death, what with vigils, prayers, readings, and other works. . . . And yet my conscience would not give me certainty, but I always doubted and said, "You didn't do that right. You weren't contrite enough. You left that out of your confession." The more I tried to remedy an uncertain, weak and troubled conscience with human traditions, the more daily I found it more uncertain, weaker and more troubled.
- B. Confessor - bring something real to confess
- C. Luther saw his sin and God's righteousness; but he had a faulty view of grace, that God helped those who did what was within them
- D. Ben Franklin - God helps those who help themselves
- E. What is grace? Why is it necessary and sufficient for salvation?

II. Sin, Grace, and Salvation

- A. We are saved by grace - God's merciful kindness and favor given to us through Christ
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8–9
 - 1. We are saved by grace, not anything from us

- 2. Salvation is a gift of God - we are saved by grace
- 3. The medieval church agreed with this!

B. The medieval teaching about sin, grace, salvation

- 1. The medieval church taught that sin made us sick, but did not so affect us that we could not choose to love and serve God
- 2. For them grace was a substance that was infused into us, which gave us the extra help we needed to overcome sin and choose to do what was right and to walk with God
- 3. Michael Reeves - a can of spiritual Red Bull to give us the extra pep we need to choose God over sin
- 4. Grace improved our natural abilities, but we must then work
- 5. Grace is necessary - but it is not sufficient

C. The Reformation teaching about sin, grace, salvation

- 1. Sin did not make us spiritually sick, but rather dead
As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,.. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:1, 4–5
 - a. The effect of sin was not that we were lazy or sick, but rather that we were dead, unable to do anything to save ourselves.
 - b. Dead men can not do anything to save themselves - they can not even respond to the efforts of others
- 2. Sin had left us in total depravity - no ability to do good or seek God

As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” Romans 3:10–12

- a. As a result of sin, NO ONE does good
- b. As a result of sin, NO ONE seeks God
- c. As a result of sin, if we are to be saved, it will have to be entirely a work of God’s grace, for there is nothing in us that deserves or desires salvation

3. Grace is not something infused into us, but is rather that unmerited kindness and favor of God

- a. The word grace means to have a favorable disposition toward someone - it is a description of God’s character, not a substance
- b. Grace is seen as God’s kindness and mercy that is given to sinful men to save them

But when the **kindness** and **love** of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ **he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been **justified by his grace**, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4–7

- 1. Saved because of God’s kindness, love and mercy
- 2. This is called being justified by His grace
- 3. Grace is God’s kindness, love, and mercy shown to sinners because of the work of Jesus Christ

4. Grace is not added on to our works, but is the opposite of our own works

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8–9

So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. Romans 11:5–6

- a. Saved by grace, not by works; put in opposition
- b. Romans 11 - Paul quoting for OT on God’s election
- c. He says salvation is always by grace, not works
- d. Grace + works nullifies grace

5. Grace does not make us good enough to be saved - God saves the wicked

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. Romans 4:4–5

- a. Gift (Ephesians 2:8-9) and works again opposed
- b. God justifies the wicked, not those who have begun to do better because grace made them better

D. Understanding sola gratia

- 1. God in His kindness and mercy saves those who are unable to do anything to save or improve themselves, and He does this, not because of anything good in them or any good they do or choose, but purely because of His own mercy.
- 2. Sola Gratia means that God does not help those who help themselves, but rather that He saves those who could do nothing to save themselves.

III. The Need For Sola Gratia Today

A. We trust in our efforts rather than grace more than ever

1. Since the fall we always tend to trust in our own efforts rather than God's unmerited favor
2. Lifeway/Ligonier poll in 2014
 - a. A person obtains peace with God by first taking the initiative to seek God and then God responds with grace - 64% agree strongly or somewhat - exact teaching Reformers rebelled against!
 - b. Salvation always begins with God changing a person so that they will turn to Him in faith - only 41% agreed
 - c. Everyone sins at least a little, but most people are by nature good - 67% agreed
 - d. People do not have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative - 76% disagreed
3. Other polls on beliefs related to sola gratia
 - a. There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. - 66% of evangelicals at a conference disagreed
 - b. God helps those who help themselves - 86% of evangelicals agreed; 65% thought it was Scripture!

B. The current state of American Evangelical beliefs

1. We often believe Ben Franklin more than Scripture
2. We believe the exact things that the Reformers said was wrong with the medieval church!
3. We know our cultural beliefs better than our Bibles, and so we live by God helps those who help themselves rather than by sola gratia

4. We believe, preach & live as if our problem is external & the solution is internal, but our problem is internal and the solution is external
5. We believe, preach and live as if grace is necessary - but not sufficient. This is why we need a modern Reformation!

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do you know that you can do nothing to save yourself?

1. We are corrupt to the core of our being, and all we do is polluted by sin
2. We are spiritually dead, with no desire to seek God
3. Our only hope is the grace of God
4. But thanks be to God - He is gracious to we sinful humans!
5. Do not argue with God, or try to add your efforts to His grace - humbly admit your need

B. The Table of Grace Alone (sing Amazing Grace)

1. This Table is visible sola gratia - we add nothing
2. We come to this Table hungry, poor, needy - and receive grace
3. All that is required is we admit we have nothing - and come to eat freely

4. “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and
without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not
bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your
soul will delight in the richest of fare. Isaiah 55:1–2

5. Come to the Table of Grace (sing Amazing Grace)

Sola Gratia - Saved Because of Grace Alone

Ephesians 2:8-10

October 8, 2017

Communion

2 Timothy 1:2

Teaching keywords: Grace; Gospel; God's Character; Salvation

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus
our Lord. 2 Timothy 1:2

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and
this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ⁹ not by
works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians
2:8–10