

ECHOES OF THE REFORMATION: Five Truths that Shape the Christian Life

Session 3: GRACE ALONE

INTRODUCTION:

“This is God’s goal in salvation of fallen human beings: The exaltation of His grace shown to us in Christ.” - Jerry Bridges

The reformation of God’s church never really ends because we live in a broken world full of sin, deceit, and false teaching. Because of this, the Holy Spirit is continually working to transform and sanctify the church, especially pertaining to the gospel message. Satan is always trying to twist and distort the gospel because he knows that *if the church loses the gospel, we lose everything.*

The gospel must be protected and defended in every generation, including our own. As the Reformers fought to protect the true gospel, we too must fight to protect the gospel given to us through God’s Word.

Refocusing on the five solas of the Reformation can bring fresh, God-centered, word-driven, gospel-focused, energy back into evangelical churches as they bear faithful witness to the gospel of the kingdom.

SOLA GRATIA VIDEO NOTES:

- *Grace is God’s unmerited favor*
- *The righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account. It’s reckoned to be ours though we do not possess it in our own behavior and life.*
- *God is not an earthly father. He is the holy and righteous God, whose righteousness we can’t possibly meet in any sense.*
- *The problem with merit is that it doesn’t exist. All that really exists is the sheer grace and mercy of God.*
- *God demands an absolute righteousness. That’s what He provided in His own Son.*
- *We are not saved by the setting aside of justice but by the fulfillment of justice.*
- *The cross is not the only demonstration of God’s great love for us, but it’s also the demonstration of the seriousness with which He took sin.*
- *Because we are part of God’s family, there’s an extraordinary responsibility and calling that come with this.*

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Purgatory: a state after death according to Roman Catholic belief in which the souls of people who die are made pure through suffering before going to heaven; a place or state of suffering.

Indulgence: a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins; a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. The recipient of an indulgence must perform an action to receive it.

Treasury of Merit: the superabundant satisfaction of Christ for human sins and the excess of merit of the saints which according to Roman Catholic theology is effective for salvation of others and is available for dispensation through indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church.

Imputation: the idea that Christ's righteousness has been counted or credited to believers

SOLA GRATIA - GRACE ALONE:

*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. Eph. 2:8-9 (ESV)*

The Roman Catholic Church taught that people could earn or receive grace through works, the purchase of indulgences, and even suffering in purgatory. At the time of the Reformation, peoples hope was not in Christ alone, but in their ability to meet God's righteous standard on their own.

The Reformers insisted that these teachings cheapened the truth of grace. So, they taught that God's grace, not our works, is the only thing that can enable totally depraved, spiritually dead people to see their need of Christ, who alone provides the remedy for their sin.

The Reformation was sparked because everyday people like you and me were being taught that we didn't have direct access to God and that God's grace wasn't sufficient for us. The Roman Catholic Church was selling something that God gives freely!

Martin Luther's life was transformed when he realized the truth of **Romans 11:6**: *But if it [justification] is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

"What is it about your own miserable works and doings that you think you could please God more than the sacrifice of His own Son?" - Martin Luther

“To suppose that the Lord Jesus has only half saved men, and that there is needed some work or feeling of their own to finish his work; is wicked.” - Charles Spurgeon

If we understand this doctrine of salvation by grace alone we understand that nothing we do or have done contributes to our salvation.

DEFINING GRACE:

2 Cor. 9:12-15 (ESV): *For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing **grace of God** upon you. Thanks be to God for his **inexpressible gift!***

The Apostle Paul described God’s grace as *inexpressible*.

Standard definition of *grace*: God’s unmerited favor to those who deserve His wrath (Jerry Bridges)

Common grace: God’s unmerited but nonsalvific favor toward the fallen creation that restrains evil and allows human beings to flourish in this earthly realm. (Thomas Schreiner)

Special grace: God’s unmerited salvific favor exhibited in and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The active outworking of God’s unmerited favor in the life of the church and of the believer. (Thomas Schreiner)

TRUTHS ABOUT GRACE:

- God’s grace _____, and then _____ the believer. The Christian life originates in God’s grace, and is lived out by God’s grace. (Gal. 3:3; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:2; Titus 2:11-12)
- God’s grace assumes _____. (Rom. 3:23)
- God’s grace cannot be _____. (Rom. 3:10-12; 11:6; John 1:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:8-10; Eph. 2:1)
- God’s grace is a _____ _____. (Rom. 3:23-25; 5:17; Eph. 2:4-5)
- God’s grace is free, but it’s not _____. (Isaiah 53:4-6)
- Saving grace comes only through _____. (John 1:16-17)

- God's grace gives us _____. (Eph. 1:13-14; John 6:37; Rom. 8:16)
- God's grace gives us _____. (Heb. 4:16)
- God's grace is _____. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- God's grace gives us _____. (1 Cor. 15:10)
- God's grace can be _____ by ungodly people. (Jude 1:4)

GRACE AND GOOD WORKS:

Grace is opposed to earning our salvation, but it's not opposed to effort in living out our salvation. There is no plausible way to read the Bible and conclude that God working in us absolves us from working hard. On the contrary, God saves us for good works.

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

Titus 2:11-14: *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**.*

2 Cor. 9:8: *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may **abound in every good work**.*

KEY QUESTION: Am I living and modeling a life a grace?

"Your worst days are never so bad that your beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace." - Jerry Bridges

"The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God can't keep you and the power of God can't use you." - Warren Wiersbe

"To know Jesus is the shortest description of true grace; to know him better is the surest mark of growth in grace; to know him perfectly is eternal life." - John Newton

AMAZING GRACE:

Amazing Grace by John Newton

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

WHY IS GRACE SO AMAZING?

By grace we are justified (Rom. 3:24), by grace we exhort (Rom. 12:3), by grace we build (1 Cor. 3:10), by grace we work hard (1 Cor. 15:10), by grace we give generously (2 Cor. 8:7), by grace we use our gifts (Eph. 4:7); by grace we are strengthened (Heb. 13:9), and by grace we are saved (Eph. 2:8). Every good thing we do, every true thing we believe, every bit of resting, every bit of striving, every mercy and every effort is by grace (James 1:17). - Kevin DeYoung