

I. Intro

A. Text: **Acts 16:25-31**

²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." ²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:25-31)

B. 5 Solas

1. Sola Scriptura
2. Sola Gratia
3. Sola Fide
4. Sola Christus
5. Soli Deo Gloria

C. Recap: Grace Alone Saves

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph. 2:8)

1. Biblical Definitions of Grace
 - a. O.T. Grace (chanan #2603): to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, to have pity on another, to show favor toward another.
 - b. N.T. Grace (charis #54850): unmerited favor, that which produces joy and delight, God's inexhaustible resources that supplies our desperate need.
2. Grace is God's violent, bloody response to our violent bloody rebellion against Him.
 - a. Personified in Jesus Christ

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- b. **Misconception**: We did NOT come into right standing with God because we apologized... Because we felt sorry for our wrongs.
 - i. Feeling sorry can never make what is wrong, right.
 - ii. Our faith is not strong enough to make what is wrong, right.
 - c. Grace (by nature) is that which God alone provides, from His own resources. None of us.

3. Grace Did It All: We Are His Handiwork (v.10)

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

- a. We Are Simply the Result of God's Doing in Our lives.
 - i. We are the end product of His performing, molding, breaking, shaping, etc.
 - b. God poured all of His unbridled, unmerited, unbudgeted grace on us with purpose in mind: Good works.
 - i. God's grace (His power) stoops down to give favor toward us (in the person of his son Jesus).
 - c. Simply receiving the grace of God is that which defines those that belong to God.
- D. Simply Receiving, Simply Accepting the Grace of God as the only means to come into Right Standing with a Holy God... is what we call faith.

II. Body

A. Only Believe

- 1. Text/ Context
 - a. Paul and Silas had been arrested for casting the spirit of divination out of a servant girl. (v.16)
 - i. *"These are servants of the Most High, who proclaim the way of salvation"* (v.17)
 - ii. Paul, greatly annoyed, said *"Come out of her"*. He came out that very hour. (v. 18)
 - iii. Her masters saw that their profit just got eliminated. (v. 19a)

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- iv. They had Paul and Silas arrested. (**v. 19b**)
 - b. Paul and Silas were beaten with many stripes and placed in the “inner prison”.
 - c. Keeper of the prison probably noticed that there was something different about these Jesus believers.
 - i. Facing possible execution the next day.
 - ii. Instead of planning their defense and getting their story together, they were up praising the only one powerful enough to deliver them.
 - 2. At midnight they were still praising this God for His grace toward them. Everyone in the prison was up listening. (**v. 25**)
 - a. Suddenly the foundation of the prison shook and everyone’s chains were loosed.
 - b. This would have been cool if it was a chance earthquake AND the prisoners manipulated the circumstances to escape.
 - c. But everyone stayed right where they were at, simply enjoying the Presence of the Lord.
 - 3. When the jailer walked in, he witnessed what only God could do and coveted it.
 - a. He wanted that grace on His life.

³⁰ And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:30-31)

- 4. Simply believe God for your salvation, your deliverance
 - a. Do you believe He’ll do it? Do you have faith that He’ll do it?

Believe (pisteuo #4100): to be won over, to be fully persuaded in, to trust completely in, to rest in, to be completely dependent upon.

- 5. Are we are saved by grace or are we saved by faith?
 - a. The grace of God (God being favorable to us, God stooping to give us what only he possesses and produces) is the only thing powerful enough to save us.

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- b. Will you simply rest in the grace of God alone? Will you trust completely in what He alone gives freely?

B. Problem #1: (Believing) Faith vs. Works

- 1. Over the centuries, bit by bit the organized church developed a belief that the all-powerful grace of God was poured out only on church leadership.
 - a. The grace (given to leadership) was rationed out to lay people as they participated in church sacraments (baptism, communion, confirmation, confession, marriage, etc.)
 - i. Produced a monopoly on the grace of God.
 - ii. Produced a system where grace is accumulated through sacraments, religious rituals, and good deeds... Then measure against the individual sins people committed.
- 2. Doctrine of faith is often mixed with works to achieve salvation.

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?... Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works’” (James 2:14, 17-18)

- i. For a minute, this logic makes sense. But that would mean that we'd have to throw the whole book of Galatians out the window.

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through [performing] the law, then Christ died in vain.” (Gal. 2:20-21)

- b. Nothing wrong with the law/ works. In fact, resting (in faith) on the grace of God produces good works.

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3. Christianity IS based on salvation by good works and accomplishment:
 - a. The perfect and finished work of Christ on the Cross.
 - b. Salvation is earned, but know that it was Christ who worked hard paid for it.
 - c. Good works are cool, but know that Christ does all the work!
 - i. It's not you doing the work.
 - ii. You're getting worked on.
 - iii. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.
 - d. We're saved by grace through faith alone!
 - i. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.
 - ii. Changing your ways (good works) won't save you.
 - iii. But faith alone in the grace of God alone, produces good works and produces some changed ways.

*The problem is that we haven't quite grasped believing/faith (to rest in, trust in, to depend on).

4. **Believing Metaphor:** On Nov. 25th, 2010 I stood in front of my entire family during our Thanksgiving meal and asked Sequela to marry me.
 - a. She didn't have to accept the proposal.
 - b. Accepting would mean that she was placing faith in me, that she was taking me at my word, that she would depend upon me, that she believed me.
 - c. She believed me, she rested in me (so much that her life began to change immediately).
 - i. Some things took longer than others... but her trust in me actually produced change in her.
 - ii. Her faith in me occurred at a Kairos moment, yet it produced the fruit of faithfulness on her part.
 - d. Biblical faith (trusting in, resting in) in the grace of God produces good work

Believe (pisteuo #4100): to be won over, to be fully persuaded in, to trust completely in, to rest in, to be completely dependent upon.

C. **Problem #2:** Doctrine that Old Testament saints were saved by performing works, by following the law and animal sacrifices. New Testament saints are saved by faith.

1. God's plan of salvation has NEVER changed.
2. Old Testament Saints were saved by resting in what God alone could provide them.
 - a. Noah was far from perfect in his own strength.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.' (Gen. 6:8-9)

- i. You know what Noah did to be considered just and perfect? He believed (rested in God).
- ii. God gave Noah what God alone possesses (perfect, just standing)
- b. Abram was far from perfect in His own strength. Before Abram even started serving God, God spoke over his life.

⁵Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." (Gen. 15:5)

- i. Against good common sense, Abram believed (rested in, trusted in) God.

⁶And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (Gen. 15:6)

- ii. Abram didn't work for righteousness. He was granted it based on credit.

*All this occurred at least 500 years before there was a law!

D. Jesus' Take on Faith Alone (Sola Fide)...

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1. Jesus looked at the seemingly perfect good deeds of the religious Pharisees (how they followed the law meticulously) and spoke words that shocked the world:

²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:20)

2. Being good and doing good will work if the standard is another man's goodness.
 - a. But since the standard of goodness is God, your goodness will never do.
 - b. Rituals & following commandments won't do it

²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (Jn. 5:24)

3. Everlasting life is a god-given, God-supplied reality that can only be received.
 - a. Do you believe me? Will you rest in me alone?
4. Work is good. Just don't labor for bread that perishes, but for bread that endures...

²⁸ Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (Jn. 6:28-29)

- a. Believing is hard work. Trusting is hard work.
 - i. Simply believe!

III. Conclusion

A. Last week's Controversial Statement

1. Grace of God → Only thing powerful enough to break the chains of sin.
 - a. Only the grace of God is powerful enough to annihilate sin.
2. *"Your faith is not strong enough to save you"*

B. Human faith (in and of itself) is weak.

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1. Truth → We all have a measure of faith.
 - a. For some of us that's big trouble.
 - b. Faith in our abilities
 - c. It's naturally weak.
 - C. Faith is only as strong as its object.
 1. When the object of your faith in is... your faith has some umph.
 2. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (**Heb. 11:1**)
 - a. When Christ is the substance... When you depend upon His grace to conqueror sin and death... you've got something.
 - b. Martin Luther: “Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God’s grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it”!
 - c. Faith alone (depending, resting, trusting) in the powerful, radical grace of God alone, exemplified in the Person of Jesus Christ alone... is the only means of coming into right standing with God.
 - d. Our weak faith in Him alone, moves His heart.
 3. Faith is only as strong as the object that it rests in.
 - i. What are you placing your faith in today?