

Sola Gratia

Ephesians 2:1-9 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second and welcome our first-time guests...it's so great to see you on Memorial Day weekend!

We are in week three of our series "Sola" and what we've been doing is looking at the five core beliefs that came out of the Reformation...

Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Soli Deo Gloria (To the Glory of God Alone)

Now here's the thing...

The Reformers didn't come up with these central biblical truths...they rediscovered them.

These were truths that were embraced by the early church, but over time church leaders began to teach that salvation was something that could be bought or earned.

By the time you get to the 1500's the Reformers were like we're done with this works based religion...

We're going back to the Scripture...

This is why we started our series looking at Sola Scriptura...The big idea in week one was that Scripture Alone...Not the church, not a priest or a pastor, not the culture...

But the Bible has the final say about Who God is, how we are saved, and how we should live out our lives as His children...

Last week we looked at Solus Christus...Christ Alone...

The Big idea was that salvation has been made available to all who will believe because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. We said salvation is exclusive...Jesus is the only way...Not Jesus + good works or Jesus + water baptism or Jesus + speaking in tongues...

Salvation is found in no one else...for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved...

Today we're going to dive into our third Sola, Sola Gratia...Salvation is by Grace Alone

Ephesians 2:1-9 (NIV)

Pray

Last week we said that our greatest need is to be saved...to be rescued...to be reconciled...to be forgiven and brought into a right relationship with God!

If you remember, we said that the word salvation in the Greek language means to be saved FROM something and it also means to be saved FOR something.

Now here in our text Paul explains our salvation by telling us in verses 1-3 what we've been saved from...and in verses 4-9 he tells us by what means we've been saved

Before he shines the light on the amazing grace of God...he tells us how dark our lives are without Jesus...

Without Jesus we are spiritually **DEAD**

Now remember Paul is writing to Christians and he reminds them of their BC days...

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

The unbeliever isn't sick...

The unbeliever is dead...

The unbeliever doesn't need a personality adjustment...There's no therapy that can help them ...There's no self-help program that can fix an unbeliever...

The unbeliever is spiritually dead and needs to be saved!

You can put a person in the best schools in the world, and he or she will just be an educated sinner...

Give them all the wealth in the world, and they are just a rich sinner...

Have them go through intense psychotherapy sessions and they are just a well adjusted sinner...

But bring that person to the foot of Calvary's cross and he or she will be a forgiven sinner!

Before Jesus, we were all the walking dead...
We were walking around this world living by the
sin nature that we inherited from Adam & Eve

Go all the way back to Genesis 3 and we see
that at the very moment that Adam & Eve
sinned they began to die...Physically,
Emotionally, & Spiritually...

Paul explains this in Romans 5

***12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world
through one man, and death through sin,
and in this way death came to all people,
because all sinned—13 To be sure, sin was
in the world before the law was given, but
sin is not charged against anyone's account
where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless,
death reigned from the time of Adam to the
time of Moses, even over those who did not
sin by breaking a command, as did Adam,
who is a pattern of the one to
come.-Romans 5:12-14 (NIV)***

You see the progression?

Sin entered...

Then death entered because of sin...

Then Death spread...

Then Death reigned...

The theological term for this progression is called The Depravity of Man

We hear that word... “depravity” and we automatically think of serial killers, rapists, murderers...people who have done unspeakable evil...

Here’s what we don’t think of...

Nice people, sweet people, straight-edged people, church goers...people who make the world a better place...

And the truth is, that everyone...all of us are included in this word depravity...

“Depravity doesn’t mean that you’re as bad as you can be, it means you’re as bad off as you can be”-Skip Heitzig

Depravity is how God sees us...

Now if you’re here today and you’re not a Christian you may be thinking...Hey I’m a good person...I’m not like this guy or that guy...

Depravity isn’t about us being better than someone else...It’s not about us evaluating each other...It’s about God evaluating us!

When He evaluates us, we are as bad off spiritually speaking...as we can possibly be. Again, Paul lays this out for us in Romans...

9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

10 As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;

**11 there is no one who understands;
there is 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.”[b]**

**13 “Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit.”[c]
“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”[d]**

**14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and
bitterness.”[e]**

15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

**17 and the way of peace they do not
know.”[f]**

**18 “There is no fear of God before their
eyes.”-Romans 3:9-19 (NIV)**

This is a dark picture of our spiritually dead life...If you're in Christ this is the only world we knew...If you're not in Christ this is still the only world you know...It's the world of the walking dead...

In this world...we have three forces working against us...

Worldly **WAYS**

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world

The world has a system...Paul calls it "the ways of this world." What's he talking about? He's talking about the ways of the culture, the ways of society...

Values that are centered in humanism, naturalism, materialism and so on...

Values that elevate and worship ourselves instead of elevating and worshiping God...

Worldly ways that oppose God and His Word...Before Christ this is all we really know and all we really love...All you love is the world and its ways and it loves you back...

Which is why the moment you are saved...it's like someone flipped a switch...and the world hates you...why? Because you don't belong to it anymore...Which is why Jesus told His disciples...

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.-John 15:19 (NIV)

Ahh, but there's more...There's a spiritual force behind all of the worldly ways

The **DEVIL**

2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.-Ephesians 2:2 (NIV)

The spiritual ruler behind the ways of this world is the devil. He is the puppet master pulling our strings...keeping us entertained...

Keeping us in the dark...making sure that this world is all we know...making sure that we remain spiritually blind...making sure that we remain lost in this world...that we reject the gospel...And if he can't get us to reject the gospel...he'll get us to accept a false gospel...one that tickles our ears but denies the power of God!

The devil doesn't care if you worship...as long as you don't worship the One True God!

So we have worldly ways...that are controlled by the devil...and fed by...

The **FLESH**

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.-Ephesians 2:1-3 (NIV)

Our flesh has an insatiable appetite and desire for sin...We crave unrighteousness...Anything that is not of God...

“Our flesh because we are fallen yearns for “not God.” We have appetites and we want to satisfy those appetites without God. We want food and drink without restriction...without God!

We want sex and physical pleasure without restriction...without God! We want worship without God! We want religion without God!”-Voddie Baucham

Lost people can still be religious...How can that be?

We have God-given desires that are hard wired in each of us...and our flesh wants those things but without God...

Our world has created an environment where we can satisfy all of our desires and cravings without God...

And the devil who is at work in everyone who is disobedient to God is helping you feel good about your decision to rebel against God...

He's always whispering...It's okay...You deserve it...you're worth it...It's all about you!

He cuddles us...he caresses our ego's...he assures us of his love and undying devotion to us...So that when the light of the Gospel shines off in the distance somewhere...It won't look interesting to us...

He wants us to stay in the world of the walking dead...He wants us to stay satisfied in this world...feeding my flesh without God...because that's what zombies do!

This is our spiritual condition...apart from Jesus...It's our fallen nature...

The Scorpion & The Turtle

A scorpion & a turtle were both standing in front of a stream. The scorpion said to the turtle. "I can't swim, let me cross over on your back." The Turtle replied, "That wouldn't be wise, because while I'm swimming you will sting me and I'll drown."

“My dear turtle” said the scorpion, if I were to sting you while you were swimming, then we would both drown. That would be illogical.

The turtle thought about it for a minute and said “that makes sense...okay hop on!”

The scorpion climbed aboard and half way across the stream, the scorpion aimed his stinger and gave him everything that he had!

As both were sinking into the deep water, the turtle turned and asked the scorpion, “Hey can I ask you a question?” “Sure,” the scorpion said.

The turtle said, “You said that it would be illogical for you to sting me, because we would both drown. So why did you do it?”

“It has nothing to do with logic,” the drowning scorpion replied... “It’s just my nature”

Why do we sin? Why do we crave everything not of God? It's our nature. We sin by nature and by choice...but we do it by choice because of our nature.

And because of that...all of us are deserving of God's wrath...because all of us are sinners!

This is why we need a change...

This is why every single one of us needs to be born-again! We all need the new birth! A new nature!

We all need a But God moment! Come on!

Remember the day that Jesus found you?

Remember the day He opened up your eyes so that you could see?

It was like being in the Matrix...All you could see was the world of the walking dead...it's all you knew...

But then He gave you the red-pill and suddenly you could see and understand spiritual things!

Because of Jesus we are spiritually **ALIVE**

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. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
-Ephesians 2:4-7 (NIV)

These are two of the most beautiful words in the whole Bible...But God! You can boil the whole gospel down to But God!

We're lost...but God!

We're dead...but God!

We're hopeless...but God!

Paul puts it this way...

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.-Romans 5:7-8 (NIV)

Remember when Joseph was abused by his brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt? He went through so much suffering and grief...and later on when I was speaking to his brothers he said...

***20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.
-Genesis 50:20 (NIV)***

This is the testimony of every Christian! This is who I was, this is how I used to think...

This is what I used to do...But God...He saved Me by His Grace!

Notice that Paul mentions mercy and he mentions grace...They are related but they're different...In order to fully understand them I'm going to give you another word...Justice.

Justice: You get what you deserve

Mercy: You don't get what you deserve

Grace: You get something that you don't deserve

When you're driving on 95...Justice is what you want for all of those crazy drivers from Jersey... You're like "Look at this guy right here!" What do you say? You say "I wish a Cop was here!"

You know when you don't want a Cop around? When you're the one driving like the dude from Jersey!

We don't want justice when it comes to us...we want mercy...we want grace!

Okay so let's say that you're driving somewhere over the speed limit and a policeman pulls you over and gives you a ticket...That's Justice...You're getting what you deserve!

Let's say that you're driving somewhere over the speed limit and a policeman pulls you over and he says...you know what...you were speeding but I'm going to give you a warning...That's Mercy...You don't get what you do deserve!

So what would grace be?

Well, if we're using the same scenario...

Let's say that the police officer pulls you over for speeding and gives you a ticket...That's justice. But then that same officer takes your ticket back from you and pays the fine himself...

That's Grace! He's giving you something that you don't deserve...

Grace is the unmerited favor of God.

Here's the thing that trips people up...How can God be "just" & "merciful at the same time?

If God is "just" then sin has to be punished...
If God is "merciful" then He can't punish sin...
And by the way...Whenever God does give mercy...He always punishes sin

This is where the cross comes in!

God poured all of the punishment that you and I deserved on His Son. He punishes sin at the cross so that He can extend to us His mercy and grace!

At the cross Justice was served...Jesus took our punishment...At the cross mercy was extended...we don't get what we deserve...

At the cross grace was poured out...We are saved...we are reconciled...we get to live the abundant life here...and we get to be with God forever...

Salvation is an act of God's **GRACE ALONE**

We get what we don't deserve!
Now we're getting to the foundation of our faith...What it means to be a Christian

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

It's been said that a building is only as good as its foundation...This is the foundation of our salvation...

Two things to point out here...
We're saved by grace alone...Sola Gratia

God's unmerited favor...Alone
We have no merits that made God save us...
We're not saved because we're so good...
We're saved because God is so good...
And He's so generous with His grace!

The second thing is this...
Because we're saved by grace alone...we have
nothing to boast about...nothing to brag
about...no gold stars to put on the chart...

Charles Spurgeon said "*A Christian is a beggar showing another beggar where they can find bread*"

So many people worry that they're not really saved...They wonder, "am I good enough?"
"Have I done enough?"

The answer will always be no!

If you're struggling with this...please hear me...
You still have the mindset that you can earn
your salvation...You need to be set free from
that religious mindset...

Religion is always spelled "Do"
Christianity is spelled "Done"

Jesus is always enough!

He is Holy enough!

He is Righteous enough!

His Sacrifice was enough!

His Blood was enough!

And now, God has more than enough grace for
you...You don't deserve it...you can't earn
it...but He gives it to you...

Even if you're not a Christian He gives common
grace...The air you breathe...the food you
eat...That's the grace of God at work...

Jesus said that “God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, sends the rain on the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45)

Then there’s saving grace...God gives us the gift of salvation because of Jesus...If you’ve never accepted that gift, I want to give you an opportunity to do that in a second...

But if you’re here today and you know and love the Lord...I want to let you know that God has grace for you today...

There’s going to be moments in your walk with Jesus where you lose the battle of the flesh...and that old zombie comes back...

God’s grace that saved you is still available to forgive you...and sanctify you!

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,-Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)

His Grace never runs out...It's a never ending flow...of God's Amazing Grace! (Tissue Box)

Do you need some of God's amazing grace today?

Altar Time